United Nations S/PV.7858

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7858th meeting
Wednesday, 11 January 2017, 9.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/1130)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-00710 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/1130)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and Monseigneur Marcel Utembi, President of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo, to participate in this meeting.

Monseigneur Utembi is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Kinshasa.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1130, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous: I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to update the Council on the political and security developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the issuance of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1130).

As the Council is aware, on 31 December, under the auspices of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), a political agreement was signed between the signatories and non-signatories of the political agreement of 18 October. That signing took place at a critical juncture in the political life of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, when political tensions were growing and violent incidents had taken place in certain areas in the country following the expiration of the second and final mandate of President Joseph Kabila, on 19 December.

The signing of this agreement represented a major contribution to improving the situation, which, let us be clear, could have erupted, because the political players who had rejected the political agreement of 18 October had maintained their position that the national and provincial institutions would, on the evening of 19 December, become illegitimate.

It should also be pointed out that certain political players have not yet signed on to the agreement, such as the Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC), although it recently indicated its readiness to do so in the near future. It has stated that it has been reluctant to sign on to the agreement because it believed that the Rassemblement would benefit disproportionately from the political transition arrangements, which currently propose to give the post of Prime Minister and head of the follow-up committee to representatives of the Rassemblement.

In addition, members of the opposition, headed by the current Prime Minister, Mr. Samy Badibanga, are also showing some reluctance, maintaining that some of the provisions of the 31 December agreement, namely, those concerning the electoral process, are not realistic. Prime Minister Badibanga and his Government are clearly concerned about the political consequences for them if a new Government of national unity were to be put in place under the leadership of the Rassemblement.

For its part, the presidential majority has itself sent mixed signals regarding its support for the agreement. It signed the agreement with reservations that have yet to be clarified, and then criticized the agreement, stating that the text was not inclusive enough — specifically because the MLC and the members of the opposition who are close to Prime Minister Badibanga had not yet signed it.

I would also note that prospects for a December 2017 election have finally improved. Major political, financial, technical and logistical support will be needed. Delays in bringing the voter register up to date, in setting up a transition Government and in implementing the provisions of the 31 December agreement could negatively affect the current timetable. We must therefore do our best to prevent delays in the electoral process.

Nevertheless, the signing of the agreement opens up new possibilities for a peaceful resolution to the political deadlock. We must therefore spare no effort in ensuring that all stakeholders commit to it and that it is implemented in good faith. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Secretariat will remain active but discreet in their support for the Congolese political actors and will encourage them to continue to demonstrate their flexibility and ability to compromise.

CENCO, which has made commendable efforts in that regard, will continue to enjoy our support in ensuring that all Congolese stakeholders adhere to the agreement, for barring that, its implementation would be difficult, and that could only have negative political and security consequences.

(*spoke in English*)

Before I turn to the security situation, I wish to express my deep concern about reports of human rights violations and acts of violence in Kinshasa and other cities across the country on 19 and 20 December. As indicated in separate reports, the repression of demonstrations by national security forces and clashes between those forces and demonstrators resulted, allegedly, in the extrajudicial killing of at least 40 civilians and the death of two police officers — one killed by demonstrators and the other by a stray bullet. We know that some demonstrations turned violent, with demonstrators looting and destroying public property, resulting in at least 140 people injured and 683 people arrested by national security forces — 291 of whom have since been prosecuted or released.

It is important to encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to initiate a full investigation into the events that led to the excessive use of force and loss of life, and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

I will now turn to the security situation in the eastern part of the country, which remains very fragile. In addition to the threat posed by foreign armed groups, namely the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the activities of militia groups are on the rise in many parts of the country. That phenomenon is driven, in part, by the escalation of deep-rooted, long-standing conflicts among ethnic communities. It is also driven by the mobilization, particularly in December, of militia groups, some of which have links to political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the diaspora.

The spillover effects of the instability in neighbouring countries, notably South Sudan and Burundi, are already being felt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a risk that they will continue to grow. There are now around 70,000 South Sudanese refugees who entered Haut-Uélé and Ituri provinces over the past six months, resulting in significant humanitarian challenges. Continued reports of infiltration by elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition into refugee camps and elsewhere in the Democratic Republic of the Congo represent a major cause for concern. Efforts are under way to relocate refugee sites further away from the border.

MONUSCO, acting in support of the Congolese national security forces, continues its efforts to counter the destabilizing activities of armed groups such as the ADF and the FDLR. Limited progress has been made in that regard, although much remains to be done to sustainably degrade the capacity of those groups. That will ultimately require long-term military engagement, combined with efforts by the national authorities to address issues linked to the longer-term stabilization of the country and the extension of State authority.

In conclusion, I would encourage Council members to continue calling on Congolese political actors to swiftly endorse and agree on implementation arrangements for the 31 December agreement, and to put in place a transitional Government of national unity. Failure to do so risks delaying the holding of elections and greatly increasing the risk of renewed political crisis and increased violence across the country. Needless to say, regional and international actors should maintain strong support for the implementation of the agreement and the holding of elections, as soon as feasible.

MONUSCO, for its part, will continue to work closely with the authorities to address the increasing threat posed by armed groups to the civilian population, through a combination of political and security initiatives, since many of the security issues in the east of the country can only be resolved through meaningful political engagement by authorities at all levels. MONUSCO will continue to support those efforts.

We will engage with Council members, the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government and

other key partners in the coming weeks to determine how the Mission should adjust to the prevailing political and security situation and how it can support the timely implementation of the 31 December agreement. We will return, in due course, with our recommendations for the Security Council's consideration, while also working with MONUSCO to adjust its priorities and posture, within the existing mandate, so that it can provide the best support.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Monseigneur Utembi.

Monseigneur Utembi (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), over which I preside, I convey my best wishes to the members of the Security Council for 2017. Our Conference extends its heartfelt thanks to the Security Council for its multifaceted support during its good offices mission to help the Congolese political class and civil society in their search for a peaceful and consensual solution to the country's crisis.

We especially welcome the 4 January presidential statement of the Security Council (S/PRST/2017/1) on the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Kinshasa Archdiocese and signed on 31 December. We call on the Security Council to remain vigilant, and we call on stakeholders to support the comprehensive implementation of the agreement, particularly as it relates to the holding of elections in 2017.

Maintaining and building civilian peace is urgent during this period in order to ensure responsible and consensual management of institutions prior to and during the elections, to mobilize the necessary resources to meet vital social needs and to organize the vote. In that regard, the parties to the agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Kinshasa Archdiocese call upon the international community to assist the Independent National Electoral Commission by providing logistical, financial and technical support in order to ensure a smooth electoral process.

The political commitments negotiated under the auspices of the Kinshasa Archdiocese provide, inter alia, for the establishment of a national council for overseeing the agreement and process, as well as for a Government of national unity. It is critical that such bodies be set up as soon as the agreed timetable has been implemented in the near future. The effectiveness of such institutions depends not only on management skills but also, in particular, on good faith and political will, as well as the legal tools and financial resources made available to them.

The National Episcopal Conference of the Congo calls on the Congolese State, the international community and the parties to the agreement to advocate for the appropriate measures needed to ensure the security of the electoral process. It asks the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to support the Government in strengthening its intervention capacity and in maintaining peace in the country, in particular in east Katanga and central Kasaï. The parties to the agreement have closely examined the cases of political and opinion prisoners, political refugees and those in exile, any legal action being taken against politicians, the closing of media firms, violations of fundamental freedoms, and the sanctions imposed upon Congolese people by certain Western Governments. Our Conference asks the Congolese Government and the international community to take the appropriate measures to ease the social and political tension. Such measures should respect human rights.

The Congolese people warmly and happily welcomed the signing of the comprehensive and inclusive agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Kinshasa Archdiocese as a key way to end the political crisis and usher in social peace. It asks one thing of the international community and that is to vigorously assist the Congolese people in its efforts to ensure that the agreement is successfully implemented, until presidential and legislative elections are scheduled and held.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I thank Monseigneur Utembi for his comprehensive briefing and for the tireless mediation efforts made by the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo under his leadership.

I believe that this is an excellent example of conflict prevention in practice, for which Member States expressed overwhelming support during our discussion here during yesterday's open debate (see S/PV.7857). In that vein, the Security Council, in its presidential statement last week (S/PRST/2017/1), welcomed the signing of the agreement and expressed the desire for its speedy implementation, which we all hope will allow

the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue on the path to long-term peace and stability.

We heard the appeal of Monseigneur Utembi to the Security Council and to the international community to support the implementation of the agreement in any way possible.

I shall now give the floor to the member of the Council who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me thank the President of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo, Monseigneur Marcel Utembi, for participating in today's meeting, and Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous for his briefing, which very clearly summarized the report (S/2016/1130) of the Secretary-General on the situation in the country. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Maman Sidikou, his entire team and the personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) should be recognized for their tireless and invaluable efforts.

I wish to reiterate Uruguay's commitment to stability and peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, not only as an elected member of the Security Council but also as a consistent MONUSCO troop-contributing country for the past 16 years. Uruguay welcomes the signing of the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement that was adopted in Kinshasa on 31 December 2016 and acknowledges the important mediation role played by the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo in facilitating the agreement. In the same vein, we encourage the political parties that have not yet done so to sign the agreement. The agreement is a significant step forward in the quest for a political solution to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but, more important, it require much effort is its implementation. In that regard, Uruguay hopes that political leaders will continue displaying a spirit of flexibility and understanding during the implementation process, which should be done in good faith and in all aspects.

The main aims of the agreement are, on the one hand, to ensure the inclusive management of the executive prior to and during the elections and, on the other, to ensure the organization of national and provincial presidential and legislative elections that are peaceful, credible, inclusive and held without delay, no later than December 2017. Such elections should give rise to a peaceful hand-over of power. Stability, peace, development and the consolidation of constitutional democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are at stake. The messages conveyed to the Security Council mission in November 2016 were clear in that regard.

Although the recent political developments in the country lead us to be optimistic about the future, Uruguay must express its concern about human rights violations, which, according to the statistics contained in the report (S/2016/1130) of the Secretary-General, show a considerable increase in comparison with those mentioned in the previous report (S/2016/833). The report indicates that, between January and 30 November 2016, MONUSCO documented 4,599 human rights violations, of which 2,915 were committed by State actors and 1,684 by armed groups. As we stated, those figures show a significant increase in comparison with the 3,877 violations documented in 2015.

In addition, MONUSCO has also reported a steady reduction in the political space, with an increasing number of restrictions on civil and political rights, including violations of the freedoms of expression and association. In that regard, Uruguay implores the Government, as the Security Council has done on repeated occasions, to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to exercise the highest level of moderation in response to protests. It also implores opposition forces to show greater responsibility by ensuring that their demonstrations are peaceful.

Finally, Uruguay expresses its determination to support the implementation of the 31 December agreement and to monitor developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the accession of your country, Sweden, to the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January 2017, and to tell you how much my delegation and I are honoured to see you presiding over the deliberations of the Council today. I would next like to thank you, Sir, as well, for giving me an opportunity to address the Council at this meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Finally, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Román Oyarzun

Marchesi, Permanent Representative of Spain, who managed with devotion and competence the discussions in the Council last month.

My delegation takes note of the report (S/2016/833) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is before the Council for its consideration, and wishes to thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who introduced it. While we fully appreciate the content of the report, we feel it is important to revisit a number of aspects that he raised in order to make a few brief comments. I will begin by discussing the issue of dialogue and the political agreement, developments in the electoral process, the security situation in relation to the presence of armed groups, and the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement process.

Let me remind you, Mr. President, of the Council's visit to Kinshasa in November, during which its members conferred with various Congolese political actors. During the meeting that the Council held with the highest authority in my country, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Republic, the President told members about the 18 October 2016 political agreement signed by the parties to the national dialogue, which took place at Cité de l'Union Africaine, noting that the agreement was open for accession to all Congolese political entities. With the aim of perfecting the agreement by seeking greater inclusiveness, the President granted a mission of good offices to the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO).

The signing of the political agreement, on 31 December 2016, among the Majorité présidentielle, the opposition having participated in the dialogue at the Cité de l'Union Africaine and the opposition regrouped under the banner of the so-called Rassemblement et alliés, marks an important step for my country towards consensus on the organization of the elections and the management of the transition of the country in a calm climate. In order to facilitate its implementation, as Council members know, the President renewed his confidence in CENCO and asked it to continue consultations with the political class as a whole to define the practical modalities for the implementation of the agreement.

With regard to the elections, in his address to the nation on 31 December 2016, the President expressed, on the basis of the CENCO political agreement, his determination to continue without delay the process already under way for the organization of timely elections, in accordance with the timetable to be set by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). In that context, the process of revising the electoral rolls, begun in July 2016, is continuing throughout the various provinces of the country. As previously reported to the Council (see S/PV.7826), 12 of the country's 26 provinces are already covered by enrolment operations. My Government wishes to thank the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the continued substantial logistical support it has provided the CENI as part of those efforts.

On the security front, the report under review highlights the continuing presence in the east of our country of foreign residual negative forces, such as terrorists from the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord's Resistance Army and some national armed groups. The Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), with the assistance of MONUSCO, has made considerable efforts against those negative forces and armed groups. As the report points out, our army has made many sacrifices in this struggle. Nevertheless, it remains determined to continue the fight until complete eradication to allow our citizens residing in that part of the country to live in peace in a sustainable way.

To achieve that objective, we believe that together we must review our working methods. In order to eradicate all of the armed groups, the Council has often insisted on collaboration between the FARDC and MONUSCO. It seems to us that, despite the resumption of collaboration, the results are falling short of what we expected. We believe that the transformation of the force engaged in MONUSCO, notably the replacement of the Intervention Brigade with the rapidly deployable battalions, has not been effective in this struggle.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, my country, wishes to live in peace and to safeguard its good relations with all neighbouring States. In this perspective, you will agree with us, Mr. President, that, while my country is working hard to eradicate the foreign negative forces mentioned previously, it is not normal that, because of the forces that have come to assist it to bring home peace, its territory has once again become a sanctuary for armed combatants from a neighbouring country. Indeed, as Council members

know, South Sudanese fighters are now on Congolese territory. By a letter of 9 January 2017, we informed the Council of the conditions under which those combatants arrived. Without going into detail on the matter, my Government would be grateful to the Council, taking into account the responsibility of the United Nations in this situation to take all the measures deemed necessary, as has already been communicated to MONUSCO in the note verbale sent to it on 1 October 2016, to evacuate those fighters from our territory.

The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement process is at the heart of peacekeeping activities, not only to achieve stability in the sectors affected by the conflict, but also to eliminate the threat posed by armed groups. To that end, as I just said, the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot continue to be an oasis for foreign armed groups. Neighbouring countries must adopt policies that encourage the return of their nationals living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which will reduce tension and remove suspicion and thereby restore confidence in the region and peace in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The policy of the voluntary surrender of foreign armed groups applied to date has shown its limits. We need to examine and see how fast the repatriation process can be accelerated. In that context, the process of repatriating the FDLR and their families in the transit camps in Kanyabayonga, North Kivu, Walungu, South Kivu, and in Kisangani in Tshopo, must also be accelerated. My Government cannot understand the fact that the appeals launched some years ago to the international community for the repatriation of those combatants have not yet received a favourable reply. In the same vein, my Government wishes to put an end to the case of the Mouvement du 23 mars in Uganda and Rwanda, and calls on these two neighbouring States, which continue to accommodate them, to facilitate their repatriation.

I cannot end my remarks without once again expressing to the Council the gratitude of the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the efforts made by the United Nations to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country and to guarantee its peace and stability. Finally, on the threshold of this new year, my delegation wishes to express to all the members of the Council its best wishes for 2017.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7859

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7859th meeting
Wednesday, 11 January 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Halima
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Kyslytsya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia (S/2016/1095)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia (S/2016/1095)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1095, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

In December, the members of the Security Council welcomed the ratification by the Colombian Congress of the new Final Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo. It is important to ensure that the international community continues to fully support the Peace Agreement's implementation so that it can rapidly deliver tangible benefits that will enable the people of Colombia to live in peace.

I now give the floor to Mr. Arnault.

Mr. Arnault: I would like to thank the Security Council for this opportunity to brief it on the work of the United Nations Mission in Colombia and on developments in the implementation of the Colombian Final Peace Agreement since the end of the period covered in the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/1095), dated 23 December. In spite of the holiday season, it was a short but very active period that has brought about some very encouraging results.

I will begin with the legislative agenda. As the Council may recall, in early December Colombia's Constitutional Court empowered Congress to fast-track the adoption of laws deriving from the Peace Agreement. As a result, on 28 December Congress was able to pass an amnesty law — one that excluded serious crimes, however — which President Santos Calderón ratified two days later. That responded to a key request of the guerrilla organization, and besides paving the way for the release or conditional release of some 4,000 prisoners, it should facilitate the first major step towards the lay-down of weapons, which involves moving the members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) to the 26 zones where the lay-down will take place.

Next week, on 16 January, Congress will take up two more critical pieces of legislation, a draft constitutional law that will enable the establishment of an integral system for truth, justice and reparation, including a special jurisdiction for peace, a truth commission and a missing persons search unit. According to the Colombian Government, approximately 20,000 cases may be brought before the special jurisdiction for peace. Congress will also consider the inclusion in the Constitution of a provisional article granting constitutional rank to provisions in the Agreement that are directly connected to international humanitarian law and the fundamental rights recognized in the Colombian Constitution.

I would now like to say a few words about the implementation of the Agreement itself. A key dimension of that, of course, is the reintegration of FARC members into civilian life, which, as the Council can imagine, has a very direct relationship to the success of the process of laying down weapons. As the Secretary-General's report mentions, reintegration in Colombia faces some unique challenges, including those relating to the thriving illegal economy in conflict areas. A national reincorporation council was established on 20 December, and has since held four meetings devoted primarily to reintegrating pardoned FARC members and preparing a socioeconomic census of FARC combatants. Unfortunately, some disagreement remains regarding attention to children, which we hope will be resolved soon.

The logistical dimension of the implementation of the ceasefire and weapons lay-down agreement has posed perhaps the most difficult challenges so far, due in part to the political uncertainty surrounding the peace process in the wake of the October plebiscite, but also to the large number and remote location of the zones where the process of disarmament is to unfold. As the Secretary-General's report mentions, in early December the tripartite monitoring mechanism pointed out the need to redouble efforts on the logistical front. Good progress has been made in the past three weeks with regard to setting up the mechanism's local headquarters. The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism is now deployed in 18 of the 26 headquarters at local level and has established a presence in another three temporary locations. Conditions are still spartan, of course, but there is enough accommodation available to enable the Mission to deploy around 350 of the 450 observers required for the full implementation of its mandate. The observers will be joined at local headquarters by 33 civilian staff before the end of the month.

Let me note in passing that, at 15 per cent, the United Nations Mission in Colombia currently has the highest percentage of female observers of all our peace operations, that with the inclusion of civilian observers deployed at the local level, the number reaches 21 per cent, and that today women constitute 55 per cent of the Mission's substantive personnel. Among other things, that has enabled the Mission to develop close ties with women's organizations at national and local levels. Indeed, a special effort has been made to engage with women's groups in order to include their views and recommendations on the ceasefire process and the Mission's activities, and to establish the confidence required to prevent and deal with potential gender-based violence.

With the Mission and the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism now deployed at 21 local sites, the monitoring of the FARC camps, the army units in the vicinity and the 3 kilometre security zone between them has now intensified. Monitoring activities have tripled since early November. In that regard, I would like to stress the dedication and professionalism of the Mission's staff, both observers and civilians, who have been doing their work in the too-often precarious conditions of a start-up. Incidentally, I should add that we are delighted and relieved that an agreement was reached last night between the Government of Colombia and United Nations Headquarters on providing full casualty evacuation, medical evacuation and medical coverage to all observers. With regard to health care for FARC members, an equally sensitive and urgent issue, progress has also been made in the past couple of weeks; in fact, on 28 December, 2,500 FARC members became affiliated with the national subsidized health system.

The main focus of the effort must now be on setting up the FARC camps. To date, construction has begun in one third of the zones and preparations are ongoing in another third, while the remainder still face difficulties. Last week, I accompanied President Santos Calderón on a visit to one of the zones in southern Colombia where he reviewed progress. He gave specific instructions on overcoming existing obstacles and redoubling efforts to enable the 26 camps to be ready as soon as possible. At yesterday's meeting of the Council of Ministers, he emphasized the urgency of that endeavour and tasked the Cabinet with prioritizing implementation in the zones. That is an important decision and will hopefully allow the arms lay-down process to begin in the next few weeks. As the Council is aware, the United Nations Mission bears responsibility for verifying that process, and observers will be deployed permanently in all FARC camps for that purpose. In anticipation of the operation's start, the equipment required for the initial storing, marking, recording and monitoring of weapons is being distributed to the Mission's regional and local offices.

For a number of reasons, including the logistical issues I just mentioned, it has proved impossible to meet the first benchmark of the ceasefire timeline, which was achieving the full concentration of FARC combatants and militias in the zones by 1 January. I must also confess that it will hardly be possible to meet the 30 January deadline for the destruction of all the unstable ammunition that is spread in caches around the country. In spite of that setback, last week President Santos Calderón and the FARC secretariat reaffirmed their determination to do everything possible to meet the original goal of a comprehensive lay-down of weapons by early June. We share the perception that an overly protracted process and a loss of momentum would be in nobody's interest. Fast-tracking the ceasefire process alongside fast-tracking of the legislative agenda makes sense. Even with determination on all sides, it will not be impossible to accomplish that objective. Among other things, there is room to review the timelines once the logistical imperatives have been met. Some of the more complex processes, such as the destruction of unstable

ammunition, could begin right away and extend beyond the very short deadline originally specified in the Peace Agreement. The timetable for storing weapons under United Nations monitoring could also be adjusted. Such flexible adjustments could be made without extending the overall 180-day time frame.

The Colombian peace process has faced, and still faces, a host of challenges, many of which are mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. But it also has very solid assets. In the first place, it has the resolve of the Colombian Government and the FARC leadership to persevere in spite of difficulties, and the overwhelming support and aspiration of the people of Colombia for bringing one of the world's longest armed conflicts to an end. The support of the region and the broader international community will also continue to be a very significant success factor. I want to once again thank the countries that are contributing observers, and the Governments and the organizations that have responded to the parties' call for assistance in implementing the Peace Agreement provisions. I would also like to acknowledge the united effort of United Nations agencies and programmes in Colombia to bring help to the people and areas most affected by the conflict.

Finally, I would like to recall that almost exactly one year ago, on 19 January, the parties invited the Council to oversee the United Nations monitoring of the ceasefire and weapons lay-down process. In Colombia, across political lines, that was widely viewed as a guarantee of success. As the process of implementation of the Peace Agreement gets under way, the Council's attention and unanimous support to the peace process, and its encouraging voice, will continue to be a very important source of confidence and strength.

The President: I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, for bringing us up to date. Ukraine welcomes the Secretary-General's first report (S/2016/1095) on the implementation of the Mission's mandate.

We welcome the new Final Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), which has ended more than 50 years of armed conflict in their country. The ability of the parties to move forward and work together during the period between the plebiscite and the approval of the new peace agreement has affirmed their determination to ensure a transition to peace that benefits all Colombians.

There was an extensive debate, which led to the revision of the agreement; as such, the main concerns of various sectors of Colombian society were addressed and the necessary commitment was achieved. It is now essential that the open dialogue that led to the agreement continue. The swift implementation of this historic agreement must remain the main task for all the parties involved. All political forces and all sectors of Colombian society must actively participate in this crucial task. Greater unity around the Peace Agreement is essential to achieve its objectives, in particular with respect to the ceasefire and the surrender of weapons, as well as rural reform, combating illicit drugs and expanding political participation. The issue of training and the functioning of the FARC camps, as well as the implementation of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism are fundamental at this stage. In that regard, we commend the Government's commitment to redouble its efforts to address those unique challenges.

We realize that the transition from conflict to peace will be complicated by social, economic, political and security difficulties. Given the complexity of the process, we believe that it is important to maintain focus on the needs and interests of the children affected by the conflict, as well as a gender perspective.

Ukraine reiterates its determination to support the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement, in accordance with resolutions 2261 (2016) and 2307 (2016). We commend the efforts of the international actors supporting the implementation of the Peace Agreement, in particular those Member States that have provided observers to the United Nations Mission in Colombia, as well as the role played by the guarantor and supporting countries during the peace process.

The Security Council should continue to play a proactive role in supporting the parties as they move forward with the implementation of the provisions of the Final Peace Agreement, and in ensuring the effective functioning of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. We hope that the Colombian experience of involving the United Nations as the international

component of the tripartite mechanism will become an instructive success story for the region and for the Organization.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Swedish presidency for having included this meeting in the programme of work for January an issue of such great importance to Colombia, the American continent and to the international community in general. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his thorough briefing.

To begin, I would like to congratulate the Government of Colombia as well as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) for having given us once again an example of a commitment to peace in signing a new Final Peace Agreement on 24 November in Bogota, which was ratified by the Colombian Congress, thereby beginning the process by which the FARC-EP will lay down its arms. The Agreement is the result of a successful negotiation that included various national actors from the political, social and religious sectors, as well as victims. We wish to extend our congratulations to them all. We note that the task was not a simple one, and that there are still many challenges along this complex path. However, the firm will to conclude the conflict and to build a stable and lasting peace, which has been evident in different aspects of the process, gives us hope that the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement will also be successful.

The six points of the Agreement are a sign of the breadth and the complexity of the tasks that remain ahead. The establishment of the truth and verification commission for the Final Agreement as well as the framework plan for the implementation of the agreements are important measures that were planned in order to guarantee the implementation of all that was agreed. We are pleased to note the announcement that the framework plan will include, as a matter of priority, the practical and strategic needs of women, and we congratulate the protagonists of the process for paying special attention to the fundamental rights of women as well as of vulnerable social groups.

The latest report (S/2016/837) of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Colombia indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of violations committed against children since the beginning of the peace process in Colombia in 2012. At the same time, it highlights the work that has been done by the Government of Colombia in order to strengthen the framework designed to prevent and put an end to violations committed against children and adolescents, and also to respond to them via legislation and public policies. The report points out that the Peace Agreement has been the most important achievement in the area of the protection of children. Among its many provisions in this area, worthy of mention are those that refer to the reintegration of minors who left FARC-EP camps at the beginning of the peace talks, as well as those who who will emerge through the end of the process of laying down arms. Minors will be the object of special protection measures that take a differentiated approach to guarantee the restitution of their rights, prioritizing their access to health and education, their return to their families whenever possible, as well as their final placement in their communities of origin. The Agreement also establishes that the implementation of all the provisions refering to children guarantees the protection of the higher interests of children, as well as their rights and the prevalence of their rights over the rights of others.

Uruguay places very high priority on the protection of civilians in situations of conflict and in post-conflict situations. We are of the view that the provisions of the Peace Sgreement in Colombia, among which we find those referring to the protection of women and children, can serve as a model for other peace agreements to be implemented in other parts of the world.

With the same spirit and hope with which a year ago we adopted resolution 2261 (2016), we take note of the fact that the FARC-EP and the Government of Colombia have agreed that they will require the international support of various countries as well as international entities when it comes to implementing the agreements. In that respect, we will accord particular attention to any request made to the Security Council, as well as the regional organizations, such as the Union of South American Nations.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm the support and the commitment of Uruguay to peace in Colombia, and to highlight the importance of the principle of sovereignty in each stage of the process, given the fact that — as we said earlier — this is a process that was initiated and led by Colombians themselves, and one that belongs entirely to them. We trust that the peace agreements in Colombia, along with international support from the United Nations, will soon become an

example of good practice or a success story, as referred to in recent days by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and that it can be presented as such.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important briefing. We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, for sharing with the Security Council the first progress report (S/2016/1095) of the Mission under his charge. Allow me also to welcome the presence of my sister the Permanent Representative of Colombia and other members of her Permanent Mission at this meeting of the Security Council.

After over half a century of armed conflict, seven attempts over 34 years to reach a peace agreement, six of which were unsuccessful, a long path has been followed by the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) to arrive at the achievement of this historic Final Peace Agreement in the brethren country of Colombia. Today Colombia has become an example for the world. Furthermore, this historic process has given the Security Council an opportunity to fulfil the main responsibility that the peoples of the world have entrusted to it: maintaining international peace and security.

The signing, on 24 November 2016 in Bogotá, of the Final Peace Agreement — with all of its necessary ammendments so that all parties could commit to a cessation of hostilities and an establishment of a lasting peace — fills us with hope and satisfaction. We acknowledge the important contributions of the brotherly nations that supported the process of dialogue between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP. There is no doubt that regional cooperation in resolving conflicts is essential in order to reach understanding. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) has clearly expressed that and endorsed the peace process. CELAC has also underscored that

> "a definitive end to the conflict in Colombia would benefit the region, and we reaffirm the principles agreed to by the Heads of State of CELAC in the Declaration of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, which was adopted in Havana, Cuba, on 28 and 29 January 2014".

As President Evo Morales Ayma said to his counterpart His Excellency President Santos Calderón of Colombia, everyone knows that the peace process has not been easy, and sustaining the Agreement will require as much effort as it took to achieve it. Sidelining the enemies of peace and the warlords who stalk our peoples will require an outsized effort, and in that regard we make ourselves available with the greatest humility. In that regard, and with the same humility, it is an honour for me to point out that Bolivia is among the countries contributing a significant number of observers to the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

We would also like to highlight the importance of the establishment of a national commission of security guarantees and the establishment of the national council of reintegration so that members of the FARC-EP can lead normal lives within Colombian society. That will be an important contribution to the objectives of the cessation of hostilities and the establishment of a lasting peace. We encourage the United Nations Mission in Colombia to work closely with both of those entities.

We also take note of the observations presented by the Secretary-General in his report. We would like to underscore a number of points that merit the Council's attention. First, it is essential to establish conditions for increasing the flow of information from the parties to the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. Secondly, it is necessary to ensure the necessary logistical support in order to facilitate the work of the Mechanism. Thirdly, it is necessary to have support for the verification of the destruction of dangerous materials and hidden caches of FARC-EP weapons. Finally, as a third component of the Mechanism, we should constantly encourage the development of trust between the members of the Armed Forces of Colombia and the FARC-EP.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP, as well as the United Nations Mission in Colombia, for the commitment that they have demonstrated in building a society that can develop peaceful coexistence. As Evo Morales Ayma has said,

> "Dialogue and negotiations have triumphed in Colombia. Peace has won, and we have all won because of that. We extend congratulations to Colombia".

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jean Arnault for his strong commitment.

As this is the first time that, as a member, we participate in the Security Council in a meeting with the delegation of Colombia, we would like to take this opportunity to commend the agreement signed in Colombia and to encourage all stakeholders to contribute to peace and to strengthen efforts so that peace dividends will be delivered by the agreed deadlines.

On 15 and 16 December 2016, President Santos Calderón attended the International Conference on the Rule of Law and Security in Latin America, organized in Rome. On that occasion, he met Italy's President Mattarella, Prime Minister Gentiloni Silveri and he heard of Italy's strong commitment to assuring the success of the peace process in Colombia. On that occasion, three bilateral agreements on judiciary cooperation were signed. We are two countries that have a lot of know-how with respect to fighting international criminal organizations.

I want to point out something very important to us regarding the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict. Italy commends the Government of Colombia for structurally including the separation of children in the framework of the Final Peace Agreement. We believe that such an approach could establish best practices and serve as a good example for other countries that face similar challenges. We also welcome the agreement in May 2016, which laid out a way forward for the separation for children under the age of 15 and for a special programme for the restoration of rights and the reintegration of all children under the age of 18. We encourage moving forward with its implementation. Italy is willing to support the Government of Colombia in that endeavour. We are ready to cooperate with the Council in the vested interest of its people. Congratulations to Colombia.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Sweden.

I would just like to echo the last point by the representative of Italy, which related to the way that the peace agreements have dealt with, and how the Colombian Government deals with, the particular issue of the children.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

After all those very encouraging and supporting statements, I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jean Arnault and the members of the Security Council. As you just said, Mr. President, it is very encouraging to not only receive the briefing of Mr. Arnault and the report (S/2016/1095) of the Secretary-General, but also to receive the support that Colombia has always felt from the Security Council since we started along this long path a year ago.

On 2 October 2016 — I think it was a surprise for everyone — the referendum voted "no" by a narrow difference. This had an obvious consequence of a delay of the beginning of the actions that were proceeding for the implementation of what we had agreed upon. However, and I believe that it required a huge commitment and singular perseverence, it was an opportunity that opened the door to President Santos Calderón to initiate a national dialogue to conclude a new peace agreement, which we were finally able to celebrate on 24 November 2016. It incorporated a good number of the changes that were based on the proposals of the political leaders of the "no" movement. The new Final Peace Agreement was ratified by the National Congress 30 November 2016.

The first day of December 2016 was set as the date to start the demobilization schedule — to group the ex-combatants of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) into temporary territories while they transitioned to the agreed upon zones — as well as for the handing over and collection of weapons, which must be completed within a 180 days.

Thanks to a spirit of great commitment on the part of the Colombian legislature, the Constitutional Court approved the fast-track. The approved period of six months has made it possible for the legislature to introduce six important legal reforms — the first of which was mentioned by Mr. Arnault, namely, the amnesty law for those members of the FARC who have not committed crimes against humanity, as well as a subseqeunt law on a special peace jurisdiction, both of which flowed from the special capacities conferred on Colombia by the Constitutional Court.

The personal commitment of President Santos Calderón to go to a gathering site and meet with the tri-party mechanism, along with the Foreign Minister and Mr. Arnaud and his entire team, is another way in which we will manage to overcome the time that — well,

I do not want to say "lost" but, rather, the setback of the referendum. I shouldl ike to inform the Council that, following President Santos Calderón's visit to the field, a commitment was ratified by all the parties involved — the Government, the FARC-EP and the United Nations Mission in Colombia — to complying with the 180-day period, with modifications and adjustments, as the Mission has mentioned, in order to ensure the handing over of all weapons.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General isued on 23 December 2016. I thank Mr. Arnault and his entire team. It was not an easy task. There are in fact two Colombias: the urban Colombia, which members are familiar with and which is developed and thriving, and another rural Colombia, which is perhaps neglected and, owing to the conflict, is often very difficult to reach. We trust that, with the arrival of security thanks to the deployment of the police and the Colombian army; with the modifications and construction in the new zones, the majority of which, as members have been able to see for themselves, have no roads, drinking water, electricity or any sort of infrastructure; with the establishment of the Mission's structures; and with the deployment of international observers and the investigation of incidents by the Mechanism, which has in the past been a behind-the-scenes task — we have managed to move forward in ensuring the alignment of the three components: the rebel forces, the United Nations and the national police. However, implementing the ideas from Havana and from the negotiation period was not an easy task, as we had to actually implement them in the field, which owing to the tripartite nature of the Mechanism, occurs sui generis and is perhaps a disappointment. Despite the progress, we must acknowledge the difficulties in the implementation of the Mechanism itself.

In that context, it is important not to lose the momentum and commitment shown by all. We must to intensify our efforts — by the Government, the FARC-EP and the United Nations — to conclude as soon as possible the establishment and structure of the Mission in order to begin activities that have to do with the specific task that the Council entrusted to the Mission related to the laying down of weapons, including the technical installations that are required and that will help us comply with the Council's mandate in the agreed timetable. I would like to emphasize that we need to conclude as soon as possible the administrative, logistical and legal aspects that are still outstanding, including the letters of assist, all of which can sometimes take a great deal of time and be an impediment. It is important to find a flexible mechanism to provide speedy assistance from the Secretariat.

Colombia believes that the professionalism and neutrality of the Mission's members must be maintained at all times in order to fully fulfil the mandate that was entrusted to them.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, the assessment of the first three months is generally favourable. The Mechanism, as it has been designed, generates trust among the parties. The spirit that characterized the Havana negotiations must be reflected at both the regional and local levels. We are sure that we will be able to continue to count on the support of the Security Council and the new Secretary-General. I am sure that, based on the conversation he had with President Santos Calderón, as well as in future conversations, that major commitment will continue, including, of course, the commitment of the United Nations Mission.

The support of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States has been very important. At yesterday's debate (see S/PV.7857) we talked about the importance of the commitment of regional organizations. This is a clear example of how, with observers and forces from our region, and with empowerment rooted in a decision taken by the Latin American and Caribbean region that this process belongs to us, the oldest and last conflict in our hemisphere has been overcome. Amid so many concerns before the Council and before us as Member States, Colombia is pleased to bring news of peace to the Security Council.

The President: I thank the representative of Colombia for her very personal dedication to a Colombia in peace.

Let me also take this opportunity to once again stress the importance, in an open meeting like this before the international community, that we all come out in strong support for the implementation of this peace agreement.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7860

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7860th meeting
Thursday, 12 January 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Ilichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 28 October 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/915)

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2016/1109)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 28 October 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/915)

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2016/1109)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/915, which contains the text of a letter dated 28 October 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and document S/2016/1109, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): Today I would like to touch chiefly on the most salient aspects of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1109) that the Council has before it and the main events that have occurred since it was issued.

First — with regard to the situation on the ground and since the announcement in September by the Government of the Sudan of its forces' victory in Jebel Marra, and therefore the end of the conflict in Darfur — in the last three months of 2016 the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) saw only two clashes between the Sudanese armed forces and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid. Because of the losses it sustained during the Government's offensive in the first half of 2016, the defection of some of its commanders and growing internal dissension, the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid is effectively maintaining a presence only in areas to the east and south-east of Sarrong. That, by the way, is the area where the two clashes I mentioned took place, on 19 November and 4 December. Also according to the Government, the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid has no more than about 300 fighters, who have been pushed back to various parts of the Jebel Marra mountain range. However, UNAMID has not been able to confirm that, because the Sudanese Government is still restricting our access.

Security arrangements were made and implemented by the Governors of the five states of Darfur. Unquestionably, there was a more sustained interaction in their dealings with the traditional chiefs and indigenous administrations. All of that contributed to a decline in intercommunal violence relative to that of the previous years. Nevertheless, tensions among the different communities persist. As everyone knows, they continue to be salient because of the very long-standing disputes tied to access to land, water and other resources, including, more recently, clandestine gold mines. All of that has been exacerbated by the proliferation of weapons and an environment of impunity, thereby contributing to intercommunal violence. Let us not forget that the seasonal migration is currently taking place and that there have been numerous clashes between herders and farmers in the southern part of Darfur, resulting in 71 deaths during the quarter under consideration and the theft of livestock in the more central and western parts of Darfur.

With regard to the civilian population, including the most vulnerable groups, such as displaced persons, those people continue to be exposed to an elevated risk of violence. Throughout the territory of Darfur, there have been serious violations of their human rights. For example, on 1 January, only a few days ago, members of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the police who were pursuing persons suspected of having been involved in the killing of a soldier did not hesitate to open fire inside camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nertiti, Habad East and Straha. At Straha there were no casualties, but at Habad East two displaced persons died, 43 others were wounded and four police officers were also injured. Subsequently, calm was restored, and the Deputy Governor of Central Darfur arrived at the scene. He promised to provide compensation and to pay

for medical care. All of that somewhat eased tensions, but the situation continues.

(*spoke in English*)

As of today, humanitarian actors have verified 97,000 displaced persons as a result of the fighting in Jebel Marra in 2016, while an additional 88,000 people have been reported but not verified as displaced because we lacked access to the relevant locations. Humanitarian work remains impeded by insecurity, delays and denials of access and travel requests. The past month, however, has seen some improvements with the completion of a joint assessment mission involving the agencies and Government in Gola in Central Darfur, and the regulations governing military access were eased by the Government's humanitarian aid commission.

In that environment, UNAMID has continued to provide physical protection through military and police patrols to prevent, deter and respond to threats of violence against civilians. They focused on large areas of displacement such as Tawila and Sortony in North Darfur. Following the attack on IDP camps in Nertiti, UNAMID immediately deployed a police verification patrol to the area and intensified military and police patrols, coupled with the engagement of the Government of Central Darfur and the IDP community to defuse tensions. The mission further contributed to the prevention and mitigation of intercommunal conflict through constant engagement with local communities within the framework of early-warning networks, assessment and confidence-building missions and targeted patrols, thereby facilitating dialogue between sedentary farmers, nomads and other communities and calling for the effective engagement of Government and community leaders to resolve disputes.

Allow me now to say a word about the political situation. There have been concerted efforts by UNAMID and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. Despite the initiatives taken by other international actors, including the Presidents of Chad and Uganda, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, little tangible progress has been made in the Darfur peace process. The engine of the process and future political talks, which would be an agreement on the cessation of hostilities and humanitarian assistance, has remained stalled because of persistent disagreement between the parties on the modalities for the disclosure of armed movement locations in Darfur, the release of prisoners and the role of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur in future negotiations.

All those actors engaged with the parties in order to bridge their differences. On 11 December 2016, the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, the Government of the Sudan, UNAMID and the United Nations Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan held consultations in Doha to review the status of the negotiations and outstanding issues. On 20 December, President Mbeki met with President Al-Bashir and other Government officials in Khartoum to discuss prospects for the resumption of the cessation of hostilities and the status of the National Dialogue. On 25 December, President Museveni of Uganda engaged with the leadership of the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi in Kampala and discussed with them their specific concerns on the remaining points of disagreement. Finally, on 31 December, President Al-Bashir announced a one-month extension of the Government's unilateral ceasefire in Darfur and the two Areas, which had expired at the end of the year, and doubled down on that with the reiteration of his call for opposition groups to join the National Dialogue. President Al-Bashir also met with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan in Khartoum on 4 January and expressed readiness to further extend the ceasefire and reiterated the Government's commitment to implement the road map agreement. As Council members are aware, the Abdul Wahid faction remains outside of the peace process and rejected any form of talks with the Government.

Following the conclusion of the National Dialogue in October 2016, the Government took steps to implement its recommendations. Accordingly, on 27 December, the National Assembly of the Sudan adopted several constitutional amendments that established a Government of National Reconciliation and the position of Prime Minister, both to be appointed by the President. They also included an increase in the number of seats in the Assembly, so that there can be greater representation and participation of opposition groups, and the separation of functions of the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice. But, in the absence of an agreement with the Government on the format and substance of the National Dialogue, major opposition groups have continued to boycott and criticize the process because they feel that it is insufficiently inclusive. There have been reports of arrests of opposition party members and political

activists, as well as the closure of media outlets that were critical of the Government's austerity measures aimed at preventing inflation. On the basis of that, the opposition has also argued that the current situation in the Sudan is not conducive to national reconciliation and a free and inclusive political process.

Turning to my final point, concerning relations with the Government of the Sudan, I am pleased to report on essentially unobstructed customs clearance of food shipments at Port Sudan, but not of contingent-owned equipment. However, progress has been made in the latter area. Progress has also been made in the granting of visa requests for some of the mission's personnel. I am hopeful that that spirit of cooperation will be maintained to address the mission's remaining operational challenges, including access and freedom of movement restrictions, the clearance of military and police equipment and delays and denials of visa requests for the Human Rights Section, because that does not contribute to carrying out the mandate.

As had been requested by the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, the two organizations held discussions with the Government on the implementation of the UNAMID benchmarks and on the exit strategy within the framework of the joint working group, which convened in Khartoum in October and November. These meetings were an opportunity to review the implementation status of the benchmarks, including the commendable progress made on some points in this respect, and to identify what remains pending. However, the joint working group was not able to reach consensus on specific modalities for the reconfiguration of the mission in the light of the changes that have occurred on the ground. The United Nations, in partnership, as ever, with the African Union, will continue to engage with the Government, including within the framework of the joint working group, to address issues related to the benchmarks, the objective being to adjust them as necessary, as well as issues related to the UNAMID exit strategy.

In sum, the current situation in Darfur is characterized by a significant decrease in armed conflict, particularly as a result of the Government's military successes against the armed movements and the efforts of state governments to curb intercommunal violence. Despite these improvements, however, civilians remain exposed to significant sources of insecurity: intercommunal conflict, criminality and the activities of armed militias. Because of the widespread proliferation of weapons and the inadequacy of rule-of-law and justice institutions, this is not being mitigated.

Undoubtedly, long-term, comprehensive solutions remain necessary to create the conditions for the return or resettlement of the people who remain in displacement in the region — I would recall here that the figure is 2.6 million people — as well as for the resolution of the deep causes of conflict: access to land, water and other resources.

Now more than ever, we must call on all stakeholders in Darfur to continue working with UNAMID and the international community so that we can achieve these goals.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the member of the Council who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1109). Uruguay wishes to stress that the report notes that no significant conflicts were reported in Darfur over the past three months and that compared with previous years, there were fewer intercommunal clashes. We wish also to acknowledge the steps taken by the Government of the Sudan to limit intercommunal tensions and fight crime.

Nevertheless, these encouraging elements have not been accompanied by any tangible progress in the Darfur peace process or in addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. In this regard, we encourage all the parties involved to renew as soon as possible direct talks in order to reach a formal agreement on a cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access, and move towards a political solution to the conflict.

I should like to highlight once again the important role being played by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in an operational context that is not without problems. In terms of protecting civilians, UNAMID is focusing its activities mainly on protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the prevention of intercommunal conflict. We take note of the efforts being made by UNAMID in this context, and we highlight the fact that, as stated in the report, the mission, in coordination with the United Nations country team, mapped the protection situation in 174 locations hosting IDPs,

including camps, gathering sites and communities. This exercise measured approximate number of IDPs, the main protection issues, response capacities and risk levels. We encourage the mission to continue its efforts to improve the effective protection of civilians through a comprehensive approach, as it has been doing, for instance, in terms of mediation in local conflicts and supporting reconciliation efforts and peace processes between various communities.

With regard to the operational situation, while there has been an improvement in the issuance of visas to UNAMID personnel and food ration shipments for its troops, I would reiterate that, in keeping with the obligations emanating from the status-of-forces agreement, the Government of the Sudan must take the steps necessary to eliminate all bureaucratic impediments and ensure that UNAMID enjoys conditions conducive to fully carrying out its mandate.

We would also highlight that the note dated 23 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan addressed to the Security Council referred to obstacles in connection with UNAMID's exit strategy.

In closing, allow me to express Uruguay's appreciation to all UNAMID personnel, the United Nations country team in the Sudan, and the humanitarian actors who continue to work tirelessly, often under difficult conditions, to achieve lasting peace in Darfur.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and to wish you every success in your work. I should like also to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Spain, for his efficient stewardship of the work of the Council last month. Similarly, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the report (S/2016/1109) presented on his behalf today to the Security Council. In addition, I wish everyone a happy and successful 2017, in particular Mr. Ladsous, and I thank him for all of his efforts.

In previous statements before the Security Council and on other occasions, we have very often stressed the continuing improvement of the situation in Darfur, in particular from a security, political and humanitarian standpoint. The various reports of the joint working group, as well as the visits and missions by United Nations representatives and special representatives of various countries, in addition to the report presented today, all have confirmed that progress has been made in Darfur. This is, of course, the result of the efforts made by the Sudanese Government, with the help of our international partners. The Sudanese armed forces, as well as other regular forces, have been able to take control of the entire territory of Darfur following the departure of the rebel forces, which are now outside of the Sudan.

All of this has made it possible to ensure security and to prevent tribal conflicts. The Council can see that in 2016, there was no significant tribal conflict that could have had an impact on security and stability in Darfur. For us, that is a great accomplishment and a great step forward, if we take account of the four most recent reports of the Secretary-General since 2015.

We also have the first report of 2016 (S/2016/1109), which indicates that tribal clashes were a serious threat to peace and security in Darfur, which is no longer the case. That is why the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has been able to justify its presence, thus far, in Darfur.

Today, however, what prevails in Darfur is security, stability and recovery, which have had a positive impact on the humanitarian situation as well. In 2016, we saw the return of 93,000 displaced persons and refugees who returned from Chad and who have re-established themselves in Darfur. Southern Darfur saw the return of 71,000 people; 65,000 returned to western Darfur; 32,000 to central Darfur and 21,600 to eastern Darfur. All of that is thanks to the provision of basic services to their villages. Those villages are part of the voluntary return that was facilitated by the League of Arab States and Qatar, as well as other countries, particularly China and Japan — countries that have also contributed to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Our Government also wants to put a plan in place to improve the conditions for voluntary return for our citizens.

The Sudanese Government is doing everything it can to establish a holistic and long-term peace across our national territories to move us away from war and fratricide. That is why we are pursuing dialogue and negotiations, in order to advance the peace process and put an end to the conflict. We have made great efforts to work with different factions, and were successful when the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid joined

the National Dialogue, launched by our President. That initiative was integrated into the constitutional amendments that are currently under discussion. Thabo Mbeki, Chair of the African Union High Level Panel on Darfur, led the ongoing African mediation efforts, which seek better results with the other functions, with a view to achieving sustainable peace.

I reiterate the demand that we have already made of the Security Council — to bring pressure to bear on the more recalcitrant movements as a means to encourage them to continue negotiations in order to put an end to the suffering of our population in Darfur. I would also like to kindly request that the Council deal firmly with the case of the rebel Abdul Wahid Mohamed al-Nour, who has consistently rejected any initiative that promotes dialogue. He is called Mr. No in the Sudan, as he has rejected all of our proposals for dialogue. In the face of that, we must apply the Security Council's resolutions firmly, particularly paragraph 3 (c) of resolution 1581 (2005). It is very important that Abdul Wahid be added to the sanctions list. The African members of the Security Council should take that into account. We officially request that the Council take that matter in hand.

For two years now, the Secretary-General has responded positively to my country and to the demand that we made for a gradual disengagement strategy for UNAMID. We made that request in 2014; it is a logical and legitimate request, which is based on a number of different considerations.

First of all, the security situation and the humanitarian and political situation have improved drastically in Darfur. Everyone is aware of that. The reports of the Secretary-General are also evidence of that fact. That is why the presence of UNAMID, in its current form, does not seem logical. UNAMID also has a very significant budget, whereas the international community needs those resources to react to humanitarian crises and issues elsewhere in the world.

In addition, the withdrawal of UNAMID from certain sectors would still allow us to continue the peace process because those sectors no longer require a UNAMID presence. Currently there is an unequal situation in some zones of Darfur, but it covers an enormous territory. Peace is possible thanks to a series of factors that we see are seeing now. That is why there should be a progressive, flexible and quick withdrawal strategy.

We have carried out a number of cycles of negotiations and consultations with the United Nations and the African Union with the help of the joint working group. That group has met four times, most recently in November. There were also two evaluation visits made to different parts of Darfur. The group demonstrated that the situation has improved, thereby allowing the withdrawal of UNAMID from eastern Darfur, for example. Representatives of the United Nations, with whom we have carried out discussions, continue to reject the withdrawal of UNAMID from other sectors as well. That is why I would like to make some clarifications.

The Government of my country has reached the conclusion that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations does not take seriously the disengagement strategy for UNAMID. However, my Government has, at several turns, demanded that the strategy be taken into account and that dialogue and national consultation be considered. That is the request of the Sudanese Government. We are surprised to see that the international community continues to bear the financial and material burden for UNAMID when, in fact, there is no longer a need to do so. UNAMID is no longer needed in some sectors. It is as if UNAMID were an end in itself and not, in fact, a means of securing peace in Darfur.

The UNAMID budget is now a whopping $1.3 billion annually. A small fraction of that would allow for certain cities in the area of Darfur to be supported, which, in turn, would help us make progress in our efforts for development. Different agencies have also visited various regions and sectors of Darfur — Jebel Marra in particular. We therefore stress the need to build a road that would allow us to end the armed conflict and the armed confrontations. It would be very useful if we could begin such a project. We must take all the necessary measures to secure disengagement in a gradual fashion, which would allow us to implement the objectives set up in February 2015. I would also like to stress that my Government will not accept the option whereby the withdrawal or the end of the work of the joint working group, which my Government is a part of and is very important to us, and we need to continue the implementation of a UNAMID withdrawal strategy.

We have sent two messages to the Secretary-General on that subject. One of them was sent by the Foreign Minister of my country. We have also contacted the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on that

issue. We agree with the Secretary-General's report, in that it stresses the need to resolve the deep-seated causes of conflict in Darfur and to continue to commit the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur.

To that end, my country continues its efforts to carry out holistic development in all sectors and across Darfur. As the Council knows, one of the main problems in Darfur is the scarcity of resources. Our efforts are therefore ongoing. We are trying to better connect the two cities of Al-Fashir and Khartoum. It is the first time that high-speed roads have been built and, for the first time in a long while, products from Jabel Marra are now being sold in Khartoum.

Lastly, I would also like to highlight our sincere willingness to achieve peace in Darfur and to continue our cooperation with the United Nations, the African Union and all of our other partners so that we can attain our noble objectives and meet everyone's interests. I would like to reiterate my gratitude to UNAMID and to all troop- and police-contributing countries. I should also like to commend the efforts of the African Union-United Nations Special Representative for Darfur, Mr. Martin Uhomoibhi. In one year, he has assisted us in making considerable headway and in re-establishing trust between the Sudan and UNAMID. Once again, I should like to stress that we are ready to continue dialogue with all of the members of the Council and to cooperate in a positive manner.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations S PV.7861

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7861st meeting

Thursday, 12 January 2017, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace and Security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Fatima Yerima Askira, Borno Women Development Initiative and Youth Programmes Coordinator at Search for Common Ground Nigeria. Ms. Askira is joining us today by video teleconference from Maiduguri, north-east Nigeria.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in the Lake Chad basin region, a region that continues to suffer from the combined effects of violent extremism and a serious humanitarian crisis as well as from human rights abuses and violations by terrorist elements and counter-terrorism measures. Boko Haram continues to perpetrate violence against civilians in the Lake Chad basin region, with varied frequency and intensity, through kidnappings, suicide bombings, improvised explosive devices and ambushes on towns and villages.

Since October 2016, Boko Haram has shifted most of its assaults to military positions. It is unclear whether the military is the intended target. However, the upsurge in clashes with the military seems to be the result of reaction to the counter-insurgency operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and a shift in tactics following the split in Boko Haram's leadership last August between Abubakar Shekau and his former second-in-command Abu Musab al-Barnawi. The recent trend of attacks appears to be in line with al-Barnawi's stated intention to focus operations less on Muslim civilians and more on military, Western and Christian targets.

Despite the commendable military efforts by the region against Boko Haram, including the takeover of its stronghold in the Sambisa Forest in Nigeria, Boko Haram retains the capacity to carry out attacks, as illustrated by its attack on 3 January on a military checkpoint in Baroua in the Diffa region of the Niger, the 7 January attack on a Nigerian military brigade in Buni Yadi town, Yobe state, in north-eastern Nigeria, and the multiple suicide attacks in Maiduguri, capital of Borno state, Nigeria, on 8 January.

Far too much time has passed since the fateful day of the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. The release of some of the girls, especially the 21 who were set free on 13 October following negotiations facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss Government, is encouraging. According to the Nigerian Government, negotiations for the release of the remaining girls are continuing. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas continues his engagement with the Nigerian authorities and international partners to determine how best to support the Government's efforts for the release of the remaining abductees. In his consultations, Special Representative Chambas continues to stress the need for the international community to support Nigeria in addressing the issue of mass abductions by Boko Haram, the rehabilitation and reintegration of abductees, and for better humanitarian access to the north-east of the country.

Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien will brief the Council on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin region and the challenges there. The countries of the Lake Chad basin continue to face a serious humanitarian crisis. The fact that the number of people in need of assistance has continued to increase underscores the seriousness of the situation and the need to address the root causes of the crisis, if further violence, displacement and loss of life are to be averted. The ongoing violence has had devastating effects in the region. It has destroyed lives, livestock and food stocks, paralysed the local economy and undermined the economic development of the affected countries. The economic impact of the crisis is substantial and is estimated at about $9 billion in north-eastern Nigeria alone.

Boko Haram's destructive activities have been taking place in areas of entrenched poverty and marginalization with high levels of income and social inequality, which has been caused, in part, by the absence of State authority and a severe financial crisis. The response of the United Nations, as well as that of the States concerned and their partners, will need to address the immediate violence and the humanitarian needs, while simultaneously addressing the root causes of the violent extremism and radicalization. Only a combined approach will help to repair the material and social damage inflicted on communities. The overall goal of the response to the Lake Chad basin crisis should be the achievement of lasting solutions, recovery and sustainable development. Support should also entail measures to help reverse the adverse effects of climate change on the livelihoods of communities in the affected areas, including the resuscitation of Lake Chad and the preservation of its microeconomy.

Despite the challenges, progress has been made in addressing the immediate humanitarian needs, as well as in the restoration of State authority and local governance systems in reclaimed areas. In northern Nigeria, the United Nations has significantly increased its physical presence so as to help improve social cohesion, basic social services, livelihoods, reconciliation and psychosocial support for returnees and internally displaced persons, as well as in the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure and in building the capacity of local Governments. The three-phased reconstruction and rehabilitation plan unveiled by the Nigerian Government on 7 January for the affected areas in the north-east over a five-year period is a welcome development and deserves support.

Grave human rights violations and abuses have accompanied the Boko Haram attacks and the counter-terrorism responses. Women and girls remain subject to sexual violence, including sexual slavery and forced marriage. Counter-insurgency operations, both by national forces and by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), have been accused of breaches of international humanitarian law, including the detention of Boko Haram suspects, including children, in dire conditions, and the prolonged holding of internally displaced persons and refugees by security forces for screening purposes. Notable measures have been taken by the Government of Nigeria to address the incidents of sexual and gender-based violence against displaced women and children in camps. We urge the authorities in all countries of the region to strengthen their responses to such violations and abuses, including by providing assistance to survivors, bringing all perpetrators to justice and providing targeted protection services in camps and host communities.

There have been encouraging reports of the surrender of former Boko Haram fighters in Chad and the Niger; those fighters are mostly nationals of those two countries. We encourage the authorities of the countries concerned to examine their rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for ex-Boko Haram fighters and their families, and to enable the United Nations and partners to better support the programmes.

The promotion and protection of the human rights of the victims of terrorism must be a priority in national responses to acts of terrorism. Respect for due process and prompt trials for persons detained for Boko Haram-related offences should guide broader counter-terrorism measures. Children detained in that connection should be treated as victims and dealt with in accordance with international standards for juvenile justice. All children encountered in military operations should be handed over to child protection actors, and standard operating procedures should be developed in that regard. The importance of ensuring that military and security responses respect international human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law and of taking all precautionary and preventive measures during operations to ensure the protection of the civilian population is self-evident. Failure to do so could fuel pre-existing grievances and perpetuate conflict. As the Secretary-General has emphasized, counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights should not be seen as conflicting goals, but rather as complementary and mutually reinforcing.

In order to support the efforts of Member States to combat terrorism and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice, the United Nations continues to provide strategic counter-terrorism technical assistance and training. Additionally, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, with the support of the European Union, held a high-level meeting in December 2016 with Nigerian federal and local authorities to consider approaches to prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating persons associated with Boko Haram. The consultations underlined the need to develop a comprehensive legal framework to deal with persons associated with Boko Haram,

including a prosecution strategy, and to design and implement human rights-compliant and gender-sensitive rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. Similar consultations will be proposed to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger during a visit by the Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee planned for early this year. The visit will aim at facilitating the development of national comprehensive and integrated approaches to prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating persons associated with Boko Haram, and at promoting regional cooperation in criminal law and other related matters.

The Multinational Joint Task Force is now undertaking military operations in the area of the thickly forested shores of Lake Chad and its many rivers. The operation faces unique challenges, including difficult terrain, a lack of dedicated airlift capacity, especially for casualty evacuation, logistics and the sustenance of troops, as well as the lack of amphibious capabilities, improvised explosive device detection equipment, night vision equipment, reconnaissance assets and long-range field communication equipment. The contribution of €50 million by the European Union Commission to the African Union Commission in support of the MNJTF and the funds provided by other bilateral donors need to be disbursed in a timely manner to the Lake Chad Basin Commission so as to enable the regional force to address the challenges it faces.

A military approach will not bring an end to Boko Haram. The countries affected must simultaneously tackle the humanitarian consequences, as well as the root causes that led to the emergence of the group. Military operations should be followed by stabilization measures, the restoration of State authority and efforts to address the social, economic and political grievances of marginalized communities. The four countries of the Lake Chad basin region are, without distinction, equally affected by the Boko Haram scourge, in a context of dire financial crisis and associated political and social tensions. They need the support of the Security Council and the wider international community if they are to succeed in their efforts to bring about stability and build the resilience of affected communities.

The United Nations remains committed and ready to support regional efforts to address the consequences and root causes of the Boko Haram crisis. However, the apparent failure of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to hold their long-planned joint ministerial summit on Boko Haram continues to be a concern. The United Nations continues to encourage the region to develop a common strategy to address the drivers of the Boko Haram crisis. The support of the Security Council in urging ECCAS and ECOWAS to convene their joint meeting will underscore the urgency of the matter.

The President: I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin. I particularly want to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for so clearly and comprehensively setting up the context, the current dynamics and the options for actions. I especially appreciate that my remarks will be complemented by the genuine report from the ground by Ms. Fatima Yerema Askira of the Borno Women Development Initiative, who will be following me via video teleconference from Maiduguri.

The humanitarian crisis across north-east Nigeria and parts of Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, triggered by the horrendous, violent and inhuman campaign of Boko Haram, is deepening. Although Boko Haram has lost much of the territory that it once controlled — but by no means all of it — raids and suicide bombings targeting civilians continue to cause widespread death and destruction, fear and psychological and physical trauma. Those threats have wiped out livelihoods and vital infrastructure and prevent people from accessing essential services.

In July 2016, when I last briefed the Council on the Lake Chad basin (see S/PV.7748), approximately 9 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance. Since then, the crisis has grown further, and there are today 10.7 million people in need of assistance, including 8.5 million in north-east Nigeria and another 1.6 million in the Far North region of Cameroon. Some 2.4 million people are currently displaced, and the vast majority of them — more than 1.5 million — are children. While many families would undoubtedly prefer to return to their areas of origin, continued severe insecurity, limited livelihood opportunities and the lack of essential services still make that difficult, if not impossible, despite considerable encouragement, if not pressure, from local authorities. Members of the Council will recall that, in my most recent briefing, I spoke of how many internally displaced people, like Mustafa, whom I met at the Konduga camp near

Maiduguri, had been forced from their homes in Bama in the Lake Chad basin in mid-2015. And when you are torched out of your home, there is no home to return to.

As I witnessed during my latest mission to Nigeria and the Niger, about 80 per cent of the displaced persons are staying with host communities that are themselves among the world's poorest. But they have nevertheless generously opened their homes to the displaced. The protection needs that I highlighted during my briefing in July remain dire. Civilians face violations of humanitarian and human rights law every day, including death, injuries, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detention, disappearances, forced displacement and forced recruitment. In north-east Nigeria alone, more than 7,000 women and girls have been subjected to Boko Haram-initiated sexual violence, including forced marriage, rape, abduction and slavery. Upon their release, many of the survivors continue to be treated by their own communities as suspected Boko Haram sympathizers and face deep stigma preventing them from reintegrating effectively into society. In response, the United Nations and its partners have provided care and support to 5,900 women and children formerly associated with or captured by Boko Haram who have been victims of sexual and gender-based violence. However, those and other protection activities must be scaled up in order to ensure that the survivors receive the necessary medical care, psychosocial support and livelihood support. We also need to work even more closely with the Government and the communities to prevent the stigmatization of those women.

What started as a protection crisis has become a major food and nutrition crisis as well — today one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world. More than one year ago, there were 3 million severely food-insecure people in need of assistance across the Lake Chad basin area. Despite the United Nations and partners' mobilizing response, today there are 7.1 million. As the Nigerian Government has scaled up its security offensive over the past six months, it has recovered land and released captured people and communities trapped at the tyrannous hands of Boko Haram, thereby revealing large numbers of oppressed, hungry and abused persons so quickly that it has outpaced the humanitarian response's ability to accelerate its action as well as our ability to raise additional funds from the international community to keep up. That therefore has resulted in the staggering increase in the numbers of very vulnerable people. The Multinational Joint Task Force has also driven many Boko Haram terrorists and agents back out of Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, thereby concentrating more challenges and needs in north-east Nigeria. For those reasons, food and nutritional insecurity have reached extreme levels, especially in parts of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states in Nigeria, with 5.1 million people food-insecure at crisis and emergency levels.

In the worst affected and least accessible areas, severe forms of hunger have been reported. Despite all the assistance going in today, it is clear that, given the forecasts that the situation may get even worse and that the numbers of those in need may continue to increase, our planning should be guided by those pessimistic assumptions. And that is all in addition to, and aside from, the chronic severe and moderate acute malnourishment across the wider Sahel region — to the west and north of the Lake Chad basin — affecting millions of people, mainly children, women, the elderly, the sick and those living with disabilities.

Children in north-east Nigeria and in the Lake Chad basin are particularly vulnerable in this situation, and reports indicate that the mortality rates for children under the age of 5 in individual internally displaced persons (IDP) locations have reached a level of four times the emergency threshold. In July 2016, I briefed the Council that 244,000 children in Nigeria's Borno state were severely acutely malnourished. Today, that number has grown to 300,000 children, and up to 450,000, as we must also include those from Borno, Adamawa and Yobe.

Despite such worrying trends, there is hope that 2017 will yet prove to be a turning point for the people affected by the crisis. As the nature of the conflict changes and an increasing number of areas are coming under Government control, now is the time to act decisively to expand humanitarian assistance and protection, as well as basic services, and thereby lay the groundwork for early recovery and reconstruction, so as to prevent this from becoming a protracted crisis. Over the past six months, together with each of the Governments in the Lake Chad basin region, we have taken significant steps forward in scaling up the humanitarian response. For example, the United Nations, with new leadership in Abuja and in Maiduguri, and its partners in Nigeria are reaching more than 2.1 million people with food assistance, more than 4 million with emergency primary health care and more than 1.7 million with

water and sanitation, despite a difficult and high-risk environment for aid workers.

Since the beginning of 2016, UNICEF has provided the following support to children in crisis-affected areas. Approximately 160,000 children under 5 years of age have been reached with lifesaving treatment for severe acute malnutrition. More than 4 million people have had access to primary health care services through Government-run health centres and clinics set up in both IDP camps and host communities. Approximately three quarters of a million people continue to have access to safe water, and more than 1 million people have access to sanitation facilities meeting international standards. More than 100,000 children have access to safe temporary learning spaces. Nearly 200,000 traumatized children have been provided with psychosocial support.

In support of the scale-up, since July 2015, within a month of my taking up this post, I have released over $91 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for lifesaving humanitarian assistance to 3 million people affected by the crisis in the Lake Chad basin region. I would like to thank all Member States that supported that vital work through their contributions to the CERF, and I would urge every one here other than the three Security Council members who have already done so to make pledges for the CERF for 2017. Last December, during the CERF pledging conference for 2017, the President of the Niger himself, Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, described the CERF as a central and indispensable funding mechanism in support of humanitarian action to relieve the suffering of so many people across the Lake Chad basin.

I am pleased to report that we have a close cooperation with the Governments of the countries affected and that they are taking a fast-increasing lead in the humanitarian response. The Nigerian Government, for example, appointed a Chief Humanitarian Coordinator in October 2016 and in the last few weeks has set up platforms both at the capital and the State level for close coordination between the Government and the humanitarian community. And just in the last week, Nigeria's Presidential Committee on Northeast Initiatives has now adopted a three-phase reconstruction and rehabilitation plan, with an immediate focus on comprehensive relief efforts, social stabilization and early recovery to address the needs of 7 million people over the next 12 months. I welcome this and indeed other initiatives taken by the Governments of the four countries affected to provide immediate assistance to the people in need.

At the same time, several of the Governments in the Lake Chad basin are experiencing fiscal constraints as they face economic recession and are also involved in a costly military operation against Boko Haram. Their means to respond to the humanitarian crisis are thus limited and vastly surpassed by the scale of the needs. In September 2016, in the margins of the General Assembly, my Office organized a high-level event at which the Presidents of Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, and a senior Minister from Cameroon, all joined me in calling for humanitarian assistance for the Lake Chad basin, which was followed by new pledges of $163 million by donors at the same event; I thank them, a good result, but insufficient.

The regional humanitarian crisis that has significantly deepened and broadened with the despicable actions of Boko Haram takes place in an extremely fragile and rapidly changing part of the world, one that contains many of the elements — poverty, unemployment and the absence of prospects and opportunities for youth — conducive to both violent extremism and protracted humanitarian need. There is a clear need for continued action and attention from the international community and the Security Council.

In addition to the urgent provision of life-saving assistance to those in need, we must also address the root causes of the crisis, particularly at the community level. Poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation need to be addressed through longer-term assistance, supporting the sustained efforts of the Governments of the countries affected. As humanitarians, we are ready to continue to scale up and to work closely with development partners, in line with the outcomes of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. I would like to call on Member States to ensure that development and political actors strengthen longer-term investments to address the root causes of the conflict.

This is the time to stand in solidarity with the people of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. This crisis is urgent. Without our action, our political engagement and sustained humanitarian and development assistance, we will not be able to prevent this from becoming an even more protracted crisis. For example, supporting agriculture will be key to allowing people to re-establish their livelihoods and to avoid creating dependency on aid. In north-east Nigeria,

many farmers have missed three planting seasons in a row. It is vital to support them immediately, as doing so now would allow them to prepare their land and plant their crops ahead of the next rainy season, in June.

As the Council is aware, initially, 19 months ago, it was extremely difficult, despite repeated events and statements, to get the global community's attention focused on the humanitarian issues of the people in the Lake Chad basin; it was as though I was shouting into an empty room.

Today, the situation is different, as there is growing global attention and focus on the Lake Chad basin, and a clear recognition, including by the Governments of the countries affected, that this is a major humanitarian crisis and not just a security situation. In Nigeria, the epicentre of the crisis, the United Nations has a new and strong leadership in place and a close coordination with the Government, as I briefed the Council earlier, and mechanisms to iron out tensions as and when they arise. I am very heartened to learn of the Council's proposed visit to the area in the coming period, subject to arrangements being finalized.

Donors have demonstrated increasing commitment to the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, contributing more than $238 million to the humanitarian response in the Lake Chad basin in the second half of 2016, thus tripling their contributions compared with the first six months of the year. This led the appeal for the Lake Chad basin in 2016 to be 49 per cent funded. But it is that, 49 per cent, so we can do only less than half of what we know is needed. Despite this acceleration of contributions, which I commend, we need donors to dig even deeper. We also need more donors to come on board. And, as the Council will appreciate from all that I have just set out, the 2017 humanitarian response plan and appeal for the Lake Chad basin has doubled relative to the one in 2016, reflecting the deteriorating situation in the region, to $1.5 billion. Together, we simply must do more, and from here it is funding that is key.

In addition, I call on the Council to maintain and enhance its support for national and regional action, that is, security, political as well as humanitarian; support for the conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin being organized in Norway on 24 February; support for development strategies to help sustain recovery and peace; and support for the engagement of local organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international NGOs.

Over the past 12 months, the crisis has not only persisted, but grown in dramatic fashion. Serious protection concerns remain, and the food security situation is critical. In the face of this reality, we have made progress in scaling up the response, but it is still not enough. We now need to redouble our collective efforts to meet the growing needs. During my many travels to the Lake Chad basin over the decades, I have been struck by the tremendous resilience and generosity of the people. Their ability to cope with severe hardship and shocks is second to none. My hope is that today's discussion will take us further towards a collective response that is commensurate with the desperate plight, and the almost unique resilience, of the people in the Lake Chad basin.

The President: I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I give the floor to Ms. Askira.

Ms. Askira: I thank you, Sir, for allowing me to speak at this meeting today.

May I kindly invite the Council to join me, here in the outskirts of Maiduguri, the place where I live.

Please take a moment to picture a community of vulnerable women and children outside the city, with neither a floor nor a bed. There is a woman in her early 70s lying sick in the sun, covering her body with a carpet cloth; that is what she calls a blanket. Her grandchildren, aged 4, 6 and 7, are sitting right next to her, often with no idea of what to eat.

I was in this community, on the outskirts of Maidugiri, three days ago. I went to give assistance and give blankets to the children. This is to tell the Council that such communities actually exist. They do not exist because people choose to live there, but because people do not have a better place to go.

Another is a young girl, Yaga, who looks a lot like I did when I was 15 years old. We all know how 15-year-olds are. She was abducted by an armed group and, fortunately, got released. Yaga is struggling to be integrated into her community, her family, her friends, people with whom she has been staying with her whole life. I noticed the fear in her face when I was speaking to her and she mentioned to me that she had suffered from stigmatization. We all knew she was scared of being alone. She was scared of people pointing to her a terrorist. She was scared that people would look at her as associated with Boko Haram. That girl could easily have been me, but I had met her — who could not be

me — and she was in this situation because we did not do enough to prevent violent conflict from affecting her. We could not protect her and we could not protect her community.

She said: "I really want to be like you, Fatima, because you inspire me." That was so touching. People here are not hopeless, but the frustration and desperation make them want to make changes. I know of many young people whose stories are inspiring. I know a lady who actually volunteered her time to go and teach the people in an internally displaced persons (IDPs) camp. I know a group of young boys who came up with a challenge to do something. They encouraged many young people to engage in different ways to pass on this message, enrol in school and even teach in their community schools and in IDP camps, as well.

I started a campaign on 8 December to raise money and get clothing and blankets for women and children IDPs. Those who gave the most were people who did not have much at all, but still gave because they did not want anyone to sleep in the cold. By 3 January, we were able to reach a little more than $1,500, with which we managed to buy about 500 blankets and share them with 500 people. It turns out that we are still receiving a lot from people, because people are still supporting one another. People are still believing that they should actually help one another.

I launched the campaign through social media. It got the attention of many and made an impact in the community. I thought it was important to recognize the collegial efforts of people on the ground who want to remain your friends and who are changing life and protecting the community to the best of their ability. And to the members of the Security Council and the Governments they represent, I want to say that ordinary Nigerians like me are working every day to improve security and reintegration into the community, and to start rebuilding our lives and our region. We are grateful for the Council's political, military and financial support. While the Council debates, our region is in shambles. I want to add two points.

First, we are grateful for all the humanitarian and development assistance. As the United Nations and its members' Governments design future programmes, I would like to ask that they ensure that the programmes they support have mechanisms to communicate with and listen to communities, and that there is transparency and flexibility. In some areas, we have seen that helping people recover is a challenge, and support is needed for that. In other regions, it is still too unsafe for people to relocate and we need aid that is adequate to addressing such emergency situations — aid that prevents trauma and local conflicts, promotes people's coexistence, affects communities and reduces tension.

Secondly, as the Council looks at security in our region today, I would like to ask it to go beyond just looking at the war against Boko Haram, extending it to proactive prevention of violent conflict as a long-term solution to the emergent threat to the ethnic and religious balance here in Nigeria and in the Lake Chad region in general. We need a peace architecture, a way for citizens — young and old, male and female, boys and girls — and the State working together to reduce the scourge of Boko Haram, but also to address the conflict between farmers and herders and ethnic and religious conflict. Right now peacebuilding is urgently needed, especially when it can be used to engaged young people and women in dealing with the horrors we have seen from Boko Haram and the Islamic State — not that they should stop at that. Of course, it is impossible to exaggerate the humanitarian need, as I highlighted before. From my story, we can see clearly that the need for scaling up is plainly there. I believe that donor agencies and the members of the Security Council will try their best to actually see this scaled up to the maximum.

I am grateful for the rare opportunity to share this experience and some of my recommendations with the Council. As a young woman, I am truly honoured that the Council is listening to young people on the front lines.

The President: On behalf of all the members of the Security Council, I should like to thank our briefers for their useful and informative reports, bringing to us the complexity and scale of the challenge that is facing the region — but also, like Fatima just did, a flavour of what individuals are going through on the ground as we speak, and of local campaigns and inititiatives. I understand that, due to the late hour and the security situation in north-eastern Nigeria, we fully understand if Ms. Askira needs to leave the meeting, but I want to thank her for joining us and for her excellent contribution to this important meeting. I would like to convey to her our support for her and her colleagues for her invaluable input and for her efforts on a daily basis.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank you so much, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I also thank the briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun; Under-Secretary-General O'Brien, who has led for so long on this issue and challenge; and, above all, Ms. Askira, for sharing the vital voice from the ground. I think what she described speaks to what the briefers have noted, which is the generosity of people, who have so little themselves, and how generous they have been in opening up their homes to these internally displaced persons. The fact that the vast majority of the displaced in Maiduguri live with other families who themselves are struggling to deal with this threat and to deal with very difficult socioeconomic conditions, really demonstrates tremendous goodness. Ms. Askira is an embodiment of that and I thank her.

In 2016, a famine likely happened on our watch — not in one of the places that dominates the Security Council's agenda, but in the Borno state of north-eastern Nigeria, in the area of Bama — a likely famine. Severe fighting kept humanitarian agencies from reaching Bama for nearly 18 months. When they were finally able to access the town and assess the situation, they found that at least 2,000 people in Bama had died from the effects of famine last year, mostly young children.

The situation in Bama has since improved somewhat with the arrival of aid. But right now, across north-eastern Nigeria there are far more towns that are not getting food assistance, where people are experiencing the most extreme levels of hunger. As many as 800,000 people are living just like the people of Bama last year, cut off from food aid; 800,000 people who are at acute risk — as we sit here — of literally starving to death.

Famines, as we all know, are not natural occurrences. Famines are man-made. The fact that anyone could be experiencing famine conditions in the year 2017 should spur the Council to do everything it possibly can to ensure that food assistance reaches those who are starving. The world does not lack for food to send, but aid workers need more funding and they need greater security. And the Nigerian Government, at every level — federal, state, and local — must collaborate with United Nations humanitarian agencies and international non-governmental organizations to get aid out the door. If famines are man-made, that means that the solutions are man-made as well.

To be clear, it is impossible to overstate the savagery of Boko Haram — the savagery of the group that has set in motion the events that have given rise to these conditions and the misery that they have caused around the Lake Chad basin. This is a terrorist group that forces mothers with infant children and girls as young as 9 years old to walk into markets and detonate suicide vests. Boko Haram fighters systematically enslave and rape women and girls in camps deep in the forest, force marriages and brainwash defenceless victims to get them to carry out more attacks. They forcibly conscript boys to fight in Boko Haram's ranks, and they hold those boys in captivity in virtual enslavement against their will.

The Chibok girls kidnapped more than 1,000 days ago from their school remain the most well-known example of Boko Haram's brutality, with 195 of the original 276 girls still in captivity to this day. They are among the thousands and thousands of people held by Boko Haram, as millions across the region live in fear that Boko Haram will capture them or their loved ones next. The deepening linkages between Boko Haram and the Islamic State are alarming and ominously suggest that such a clear and present threat to international peace and security may get worse.

As the Council has heard, the statistics are grim. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, there are 1.64 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in north-eastern Nigeria alone. Because that area remains so insecure, owing to Boko Haram, 76 per cent of the IDPs fear going back to their homes, where they could plant crops and take care of themselves and their families. Across the entire Lake Chad basin region, 5.1 million people are food-insecure, which includes 455,000 with what the United Nations system and others call severe acute malnutrition. In plain English, severe acute malnutrition means that if those 450,000 kids do not get food rations and emergency nutrition interventions quickly, one out of five of those 450,000 will likely die.

Statistics alone cannot convey the human cost of the crisis or the extent of the brutality that drives it. Last spring, I visited refugees camps in the region — in Cameroon and Nigeria — to meet with victims of Boko Haram. I have seen many refugee camps over the course of my career, but meeting those who fled from Boko

Haram was like nothing I had ever experienced before. Virtually every individual whom I met described for me either a close relative who had been slaughtered by Boko Haram or an experience where they had had a child who was literally grabbed from their arms — an infant child, daughter or son. The marauders just came in and stole their child. Many of us here are parents and can well imagine how a parent must feel remembering the clutching and the cries of their child as they were taken by such savages.

In the wake of crimes like that, those broken, shattered families are too frequently stuck in squalid IDP camps, with virtually no services, no health care and no education. Those are the people now dying because assistance is not getting through fast enough. I would urge the Council to witness that situation up close, travel to the region to see the crisis and meet the families, speak to men who have seen their wives and daughters dragged off into the bush, women who have watched their sons gunned down before them. We must be emboldened by their pain. There should be more people here in the Security Council Chamber for today's discussion. This kind of thing is not run of the mill. It is an extreme crisis, and we have to draw more coverage to it. I think that a trip could help to achieve that. But we also have to bring a greater sense of urgency to our deliberations.

It is definitely the case that there are many in the Nigerian Government — and I know that we will hear from our Nigerian colleagues — who are working tirelessly to save lives. On the other hand, we continue to see reports, including this week, of some who dispute the magnitude of the crisis and state that humanitarian agencies are exaggerating the statistics. Some have even maligned the role of the United Nations in delivering lifesaving assistance. It is extremely important that United Nations officials be able to get in there and visit people in need so that they can ascertain in an impartial way what the needs are.

Part of what is causing some of the access issues is a concern about the rampant insecurity, a concern about Boko Haram, and that is a very legitimate concern and something that preoccupies the humanitarian aid workers in the region as well. But it is essential for the aid groups, the United Nations and the Government to expeditiously develop a plan for improving access. Nearly every time the humanitarian agencies acquire access to a new location that had previously been off-limits, the needs encountered prove far worse that had been imagined before. For example, when United Nations agencies and other non-governmental organizations arrived in the town of Rann in Borno state on 22 December, just a couple of weeks ago, aid workers discovered around 400 fresh graves of people who had just died of hunger and untreated illness.

What more can the Council do? In order to defeat Boko Haram, the international community has to generally devote far more resources to supporting a more effective, regionally led military response. Here too, there are positive signs. Together, Nigeria, the Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin are slowly but steadily improving regional military coordination. Boko Haram controls a small fraction of the territory it had back in 2015. The military operations of those countries deserve our collective support, and the United States is dispatching advisers, sharing intelligence and providing training, equipment and logistic support to our partners. But there is no separating the imperative of defeating Boko Haram from the need to address the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in the region. That means that Governments must facilitate access for humanitarian organizations, and I cannot stress access enough.

The Nigerian Government must work with the United Nations and regional Governments to develop options for delivering aid to more areas, even near the front lines. Although we know that the military operations must continue, humanitarian organizations are ready. They work in war zones all the time, but they need permission to move in. In some cases, security is still fragile, so the aid groups can reach communities only with the help of armed convoys that must be coordinated with the Nigerian military. Unfortunately, coordinating aid with the availability of armed convoys is now turning into a serious bottleneck, a serious impediment. The Government and the United Nations will need to work together on expediting aid delivery. It is a logistic and operational question that needs to be resolved soon.

Donors have to do far more. As we have heard, the Lake Chad basin region has become the site of one of the world's greatest overlooked crises, and I think that we see it in the modest level of interest in today's meeting. The United Nations 2016 humanitarian appeal ended up just half-funded. The States Members of the United Nations need to move quickly to donate the $1 billion that the United Nations has requested for this year.

Let me conclude with a final suggestion, and that is, once again, to reinforce my claim that far more Security Council involvement is needed. What we are discussing today is a transnational, counter-terrorism challenge involving one of the world's most dangerous terrorist groups, and the region's desperate humanitarian needs are the result of that group's monstrous actions. The situation in the Lake Chad basin region presents therefore the textbook definition of a threat to international peace and security. It is what the Council is on this Earth to address.

Let us do it then; let us see the crisis for ourselves. Let us demand that the United Nations and its partners have access to the millions of people who so badly need food, water and medicine, and let us look for other ways to have the United Nations play a positive role, such as helping to reintegrate the victims of Boko Haram's violence — too many of whom, as we have heard, carry a stigma when they are freed or manage to escape. Or, after discussing on Tuesday the importance of sustaining peace (see S/PV.7857), let us work on rebuilding institutions in that region.

The need could not be more urgent. In an interview last week, a Médecins sans frontières doctor talked about what it was like to visit camps in Borno, Nigeria. She said,

> "when I go to the field, I am used to being surrounded by a lot of kids, but in Borno, the kids, especially children under five, were missing. Most of them have, unfortunately, already died".

A 31-year-old mother in Cameroon named Dayo told an aid worker that she was sometimes so hungry that she was losing her senses. Dayo said,

> "When somebody spoke to me, I couldn't even tell if it was a man or a woman".

Or finally, Awa Mudu, stranded in another IDP camp, was interviewed coming back from a nearby forest, carrying some leaves to eat. As Awa said, "The leaves are not enough to live on, but that is all we have." The Council can help give the people of the Lake Chad basin, people like Awa, more to live on. But we must do far more.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I would like to thank today's briefers, and to pay special tribute to Ms. Fatima Askira for the bravery she represents and the inspiration she gives to many.

The United Kingdom is taking the floor in this afternoon's open meeting because we believe we cannot afford to stay silent on this issue, as Ms. Power has so clearly articulated. We have just heard that the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin is simply horrifying. More than 11 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. More than 2 million are displaced in north-eastern Nigeria alone, with hundreds of thousands more in the Niger, Cameroon and Chad. And it will only get worse. In a matter of months, supplies from the poor harvest will begin to run out, further compounding a disastrous situation.

Behind the suffering of the millions of men, women and children in the Lake Chad basin lie the brutality and unrelenting cruelty of Boko Haram. The group is a clear threat to international peace and security, and we have a clear responsibility to take action in response. That action will require a sustained, multi-year international effort to address the overwhelming humanitarian need and the drivers of conflict that have helped Boko Haram flourish in the first place. We must therefore up our game. I call on donors, Governments in the region and international non-governmental organizations to act with urgency to step up their efforts. Collectively, our response so far has frankly been inadequate and underfunded. The United Nations has called for $1 billion for Nigeria and $310 for Cameroon. The United Kingdom will do its bit. In September, we announced an additional $97 million in humanitarian aid for the region on top of our existing multi-year commitment of $110 million. I hope that others will join us.

But money alone is not enough. We must also see strong, effective leadership, both from Governments in the region and from the United Nations. We look to the Organization to increase its capacity in the Lake Chad basin and develop multi-year plans, coordinated across borders, to aid recovery. We in this Chamber must also show leadership ourselves. A Security Council visit to the region in the coming weeks would be a signal of that leadership and a chance for all of us to see at first hand the challenges the region is facing. One such is the worrying report of forcibly incentivized returns of displaced people to areas that remain unsafe. When one has fled murder or enslavement, it is simply unthinkable to be forced back to the scene of that horror, and unthinkable to be lied to or coerced into returning. All the parties to the conflict have a responsibility to respect international conventions on returns and on

the protection of civilians more broadly. I urge them to do so.

Ultimately, a humanitarian response is just one part of the solution. It is a vital part, of course, but it must be delivered hand in hand with a coherent security, political and economic response as well. There is little sense in healing the wounds of conflict without addressing its root causes. Let us therefore call on all Governments in the region to win the peace — to tackle underdevelopment and other conflict drivers, and to do so in a way that respects international humanitarian and human-rights laws. That means doing so for all people in the region and making sure that women have an equal say and an equal role in reaching that peace. It is vital that strategies for tackling Boko Haram include women's voices. That includes all efforts to free the remaining Chibok girls, and also when providing protection for women affected by sexual and gender-based violence.

I would like to conclude by turning to Maiduguri in north-eastern Nigeria. We raised the subject of the plight of displaced people in that city six months ago, when we last discussed this issue (see S/PV.7748). Six months on, the situation remains desperate. More than 1 million displaced people now call Maiduguri home. The cost of food has doubled in the past year. Disease and hunger are all too common. But there are signs of hope. In the past three months, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has delivered 810 tons of food to Maiduguri. As the head of the MSF mission there made clear, it is not normally the role of a medical charity to provide people with food. But faced with a desperate need, MSF stepped up to help. That is the spirit that we should all channel in the weeks and months ahead if we are to end the catastrophe in the Lake Chad basin.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Tayé Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for their briefings on the situation in the Lake Chad region. I would particularly like to thank Ms. Fatima Yerima Askira of the Borno Women Development Initiative for her especially powerful testimony, which is a source of inspiration for all of us.

As we have seen in recent weeks, Boko Haram, while weakened, still has a real ability to conduct targeted, lethal attacks, particularly in Borno state, and, as we have just heard, the crisis it has provoked has resulted in enormous humanitarian problems. Women in particular have been targeted. This vulnerable population is not safe anywhere, and we are well aware of how difficult the situation in the camps for displaced persons is. Too often, the Lake Chad basin is not on the the major international media's radar screen, despite the fact that it is one of the regions of the world most in need of us and our engagement. In that regard, we are actively encouraging the efforts of the countries of the region and the United Nations and working with them on three main fronts.

The first is military, with the goal of combating Boko Haram with all the determination that requires and weakening its ability to do harm. We know that the military effort led by the countries of the region, coordinated through a multinational hybrid force, is a particularly difficult one both militarily and financially. We are all united in the fight against terrorism, whatever form it takes and wherever it strikes. That is why France has expressed its solidarity through its active support for the operations against Boko Haram led by the countries of the region. In particular, we have been supplying useful intelligence to the countries involved as well as logistical support to Chad and the Niger and training for the Cameroonian forces. The current military operations have already shown their effectiveness. Many soldiers have already shed their blood in the regional offensive and we pay them respectful tribute.

The second priority is the humanitarian one, for, as we have said, the problems are huge. It is vital to ensure that the United Nations focuses all its efforts, in close collaboration with all its partners and the local authorities, on responding to the people's needs. In that regard, we hope that the humanitarian hubs established by the United Nations in north-eastern Nigeria as base camps for the humanitarian workers will enable them to access the population more quickly and will be operational as soon as possible. We are especially grateful to Médecins Sans Frontières and all the humanitarian organizations that are working on the ground. I should recall here that international law applies to everyone and that all the parties are obliged to allow the United Nations and its partners access to the displaced. The countries involved in the crisis are on the front lines when it comes to facilitating humanitarian access, coordinating the various initiatives and ensuring that aid for the displaced is not diverted. France will do its full share in this collective effort. For 2017 alone

we have already contributed €13.5 million in response to the humanitarian needs of the countries affected by Boko Haram.

The third priority is development in the regions where Boko Haram has established itself. Without that essential ingredient, this terrorist movement will continue to prosper thanks to the poverty and sense of exclusion that fuel it. That is why France has launched the Lake Chad Initiative with funding amounting to €35 million. This major initiative seeks to promote the economic recovery of the region and the creation of employment, especially for young people, who are, it should be remembered, the first target of Boko Haram.

In the context just referred to, the Lake Chad basin region must be at the heart of the Council's priorities. As the Secretary-General has urged, let us combine all the military, humanitarian and development means at our disposal in order to make a difference on the ground. In that spirit, France strongly supports the plan for an upcoming visit by the Security Council to the region.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun, Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and Ms. Askira for their briefings.

Recently, the overall situation in Central and West Africa has been stable. The regional countries have strengthened their security cooperation, and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of the Lake Chad basin countries has made good progress in combating terrorism. China appreciates those developments. On the other hand, the security problems and the humanitarian situation in the Central and West African region remain very serious. Repeated terrorist attacks and displaced civilians, together with rampant violent crimes, pose a threat to the security and stability of the region. The international community should strengthen its support for the countries of Central and West Africa, including the countries of the Lake Chad basin region.

First, they should support countries of the region in their counter-terrorism efforts. African counter-terrorism efforts constitute a very important component in international counter-terrorism efforts. Subject to the condition of respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries concerned, the international community should assist the countries of the region in building their capacity to fight terrorism, enable the MNJTF to effectively conduct its operations, and further eliminate the threats posed by terrorism to the countries of the region.

Secondly, there must be greater cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The international community must respect the leading role played by regional organizations in addressing the region's problems and fully leverage the unique expertise and advantages that those organizations have with a view to building synergies and promoting appropriate solutions to regional hotspot issues through such methods as dialogue, mediation and good offices.

Thirdly, the countries of the region must also be provided with assistance to accelerate their development and address the root causes of conflict. The international community should provide financial and technical assistance to those countries on the basis of respect for their national sovereignty, so that they can truly build their capacities and enhance their economic and social development.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has just completed a visit to five African countries, namely, Madagascar, Zambia, Tanzania, the Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. That visit achieved its planned goals of deepening friendship, enhancing communication, aligning ideas, building greater confidence and deepening our cooperation. China will continue to uphold the policy of sincerity, real results, affinity and good faith and the correct viewpoint on righteousness and benefit. China will faithfully implement the results of the Johannesburg Summit meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. China is ready to work with the international community and the countries concerned to support the countries of Central and West Africa in their efforts to achieve lasting peace and common prosperity and make new contributions to peace and development in Africa.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking the three briefers on the security and humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin region. I thank Ms. Askira in particular for giving us a local view on the situation. Those briefings have given us some idea of the humanitarian tragedy that the region is facing. It is a tragedy that the countries and people of the region have been suffering for some time now. Unfortunately, the crisis has gotten more serious

recently, as was indicated by the briefers, owing in particular to the security situation in certain countries, such as Mali and Libya, and the environmental threats in the region.

The military operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) have made significant progress in fighting Boko Haram and have been able to limit its activity. We commend the leadership of the MNJTF. Egypt calls upon the international partners and the international community to increase their aid to the MNJTF so that it can, once and for all, complete its task, put an end to Boko Haram and liberate the outstanding areas still under that group's control.

With regard to prevention, Egypt would invite the international community to provide the necessary support to the Governments of the region to help them with their rehabilitation programmes for former Boko Haram fighters and to help the Governments to rehabilitate the villages that have been freed from Boko Haram.

At the 10 January ministerial open debate under your presidency (see S/PV.7857), my delegation stressed the need to adopt an approach that would address the root causes of those problems. The crisis in the Lake Chad basin region is an example of a situation that would benefit from such an approach. We need to concentrate on developing institutional and human capacity in order to eradicate the terrorist groups and counter their ability to recruit young people to commit crimes on their behalf. That requires assistance to the countries of the region so that they are able to invest in health and economic and social development projects. We need to build and sustain peace in order to put an end to the crisis, as Ambassador Power said a few moments ago. That means, inter alia, that we need to have a new comprehensive Sahel strategy, because the strategy up until now has been rather lacking.

The approach that I have referred to requires the international community, including the United Nations and its specialized agencies and regional and subregional organizations, to pool their efforts and work together with the States of the region. What is needed is coordination and cooperation among the mechanisms of all of the parties concerned, because that will ensure peace and save the peoples of the region from political, humanitarian and security crises.

Egypt is fully prepared to step up its cooperation with the countries of the Lake Chad basin region through projects and programmes under the Egyptian Partnership Agency for Development, with a view to alleviating the crisis faced by the region and its people. That will be within the framework of a comprehensive strategy aimed at sustaining peace in that region and other regions of the African continent.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I thank Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Zerihoun and Ms. Askira for their important briefings.

Years of violence by Boko Haram have profoundly undermined peace, security and livelihoods in the Lake Chad basin region. The ongoing hit-and-run attacks by Boko Haram have displaced millions of people, disrupting agricultural activities and access to basic services. As indicated by our briefers today, the humanitarian crisis in the region has unfortunately become even worse since the previous briefing in July 2016 (see S/PV.7748).

Japan has focused its financial assistance to the Lake Chad basin region on humanitarian assistance and the strengthening of social stability. On the bilateral front, we announced approximately $3 million in food assistance to the Niger in December 2016. In the light of the large gender impact of the Boko Haram crisis, we have also been supporting the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women's Gender-Responsive Humanitarian Action and Assistance of Women and Girls Affected by Boko Haram Terrorism in Diffa, the Niger, since last year. We hope to do more. But obviously, the scope and intricacy of the challenges facing the region require more than humanitarian assistance. The continuous efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and other military operations by countries in the region have significantly contained Boko Haram and dislodged them from their former strongholds. As tragically illustrated by the attacks on soldiers in Diffa on 31 December, the region must, however, remain vigilant against insurgents, who are still capable of attacking villages and military installations.

Along with the progress in military operations, the long-term socioeconomic development challenges also require persistent attention. As noted by the President of Nigeria during the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, which was held in December last year, reducing youth unemployment promotes stabilization and discourages recruitment by Boko Haram. We must not allow Boko Haram to continue to poison young people, who are among the

most precious assets of Africa. The Council needs to mobilize comprehensive responses to the complex issues affecting the Lake Chad basin region and work towards sustaining peace. It is equally vital that the countries in the region demonstrate ownership of the socioeconomic development activities in their communities over the long term.

Japan supports the proposed Security Council mission to the region aimed at assessing the situation in the Lake Chad basin region and hopes that it will result in useful discussions with the regional stakeholders and demonstrate the keen awareness of the Council of the crisis.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Zerihoun, Mr. O'Brien, and Ms. Fatima Yerima Askira for their briefings.

The situation in the Lake Chad basin region is very alarming. Lake Chad, or the "vanishing lake", as it is also known, has already lost 90 per cent of its surface area over the past 40 years. Of the population around the basin, there are approximately 10 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. That number is equal to three times the total population of my country. Unfortunately, however, that crisis has received very little media coverage, and the international community does not know very much about it.

Uruguay has been following the crisis in that area from a comprehensive point of view. There are a number of aggravating factors contributing to the crisis, in particular the very difficult security situation undermined by the terrorist group, Boko Haram, the lack of food supplies, and the unmet needs of the population, among others. The multidimensional nature of the humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad basin region has a whole range of causes and consequences that everyone here is aware of and which we do not need to spell out in detail here.

Last Tuesday, we held an open debate (see S/PV.7857) at the ministerial level on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, during which much was said about the importance of preventing conflict and the need to carry out activities that contribute to sustaining peace. The Lake Chad basin region has been facing a multifaceted structural crisis for many years now, and it is necessary to undertake activities that not only mitigate the terrorist threat and provide food supplies to the population, but that also contribute to long-term stability. The Security Council and the United Nations as a whole should make full use of their interventions so as to address and contain the crisis there.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, there are 1.9 million internally displaced people in Nigeria alone, of which half are children. The region is very insecure, with very high population growth rates, and is affected by climate change, poverty and low levels of investment and social infrastructure. The region cannot have a promising future unless its countries, and its communities in particular, are given the necessary tools to emerge from this severe crisis and build lasting peace. The international community should spare no effort to provide the region with those instruments. That is why Uruguay considers it important to acknowledge the role of the United Nations specialized agencies, as well as that of the donor countries that have lived up to their pledges of assistance. We would also like to recognize the role of the Multinational Joint Task Force and its progress in combating Boko Haram. That is a clear example of the fact that coordinated regional efforts are essential in crises of this type, where those who are trying to undermine stability recognize neither borders nor nations.

In a region where 10 million people need assistance, where 7 million people are severely undernourished and 2.7 million people are internally displaced, we need to address the deep-rooted causes of the crisis, including hunger, lack of education and access to water, insecurity, lack of medical facilities, among other factors. We need, therefore, to offer lasting solutions to the people in the region that can bolster their capacity for resilience and adaptability in the face of so much adversity.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I thank the President for organizing this briefing. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun,and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their updates. I also thank Ms. Askira for her testimony.

Italy has been following very closely the situation in north-eastern Nigeria, the Lake Chad basin and the region as a whole, where, as we have heard, there is an ongoing complex crisis encompassing security, development and humanitarian factors. In a demonstration of its concern, Italy recently decided to open a new Embassy in Niamey, the Niger, which will provide an addition to our already extensive network in that part of the world.

First, with regard to the security dimension, although some progress has been achieved against Boko Haram, it continues to represent a serious threat to peace and security. We therefore fully support the ongoing efforts by the Governments of the region, regional organizations and the Multinational Joint Task Force to curb the activities of Boko Haram. We support their efforts, both bilaterally and through the European Union — which, by the way, is providing substantial funding for the mission. Moreover, we are concerned by the numerous trafficking networks that are operating in the region. We cannot underestimate their ties with Boko Haram and transnational criminal activities. We believe that we must show resolve in combating all instances of smuggling, especially human trafficking, which is connected to that phenomenon.

In that regard, I would like to mention resolution 2195 (2014), which calls for international action to secure borders and prosecute illicit networks so as to prevent terrorists from benefiting from transnational organized crime, and urges Member States to enhance regional coordination on cross-border counter-measures to fight terrorist- and other related crimes. We believe that the role played by regional and subregional organizations is essential in countering those threats, and the Council must encourage them to play an even more proactive role by also developing a comprehensive regional strategy. In that respect, this very debate could perhaps give new momentum to the proposal for a joint summit between the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States to discuss the threat posed by Boko Haram from a regional perspective. That is why we also fully support the idea of a Security Council mission to the region, as it would provide an opportunity to deliver a strong unified message of support and commitment, as well as an opportunity to examine the effects of climate change on security and the displacement of people in the region.

Turning briefly to the humanitarian aspect, we have heard about the terrible situation that millions of people in the region are facing. Boko Haram, which compounds that difficulty, continues to use sexual and gender-based violence and rape as weapons of war, as well as to exploit women and minors as suicide bombers. We therefore believe that efforts to prevent and address sexual violence should also be strategically aligned with efforts to prevent violent extremism and terrorism in the region. We are particularly concerned by the increasing number of internally displaced persons. Although we have heard the sheer numbers of people involved, we also wish to draw attention to the fact that the current instability, the effects of climate change in the region and the movement of populations create an environment that is conducive to illicit activities, such as smuggling and human trafficking. In that respect, we believe that it is important to increase the involvement of economic and development actors, such as the World Bank, and to direct our efforts towards institution-building, which other colleagues have mentioned, and towards strengthening infrastructure in the region. Accordingly, it is key to extend to the countries of the region initiatives developed by the Peacebuilding Commission based on the concept of sustaining peace and preventive diplomacy, so as to ensure the implementation of early development programmes as a potential means to reduce the risks of radicalization.

In conclusion, Italy stands ready to support the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other international agencies to bring relief to the people affected by the massive humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad basin region, as well as the Government of Nigeria, which must be supported in its tireless efforts. We must also strengthen cooperation with the agencies and non-governmental agencies on the ground. Italy also contributes bilaterally and through United Nations agencies, in particular by funding projects aimed at strengthening the resiliency of the local population and mitigating the risks of internal displacement and migration.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for their briefings on the security and humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin region. I also wish to thank Ms. Askira for her briefing via video teleconference.

The security challenge faced by the region, including but not limited to the threats of terrorism and violent extremism, should indeed be a matter of huge concern. Both Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Under-Secretary-General O'Brien were very convincing in their description of the magnitude of the challenge that the region is facing. At the same time, we take note of the progress that the countries of the region have made in the fight against Boko Haram through the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. However, we know that that terrorist

group continues to pose serious a threat to peace and stability in the region by targeting innocent civilians, particularly women and children.

The attempts by Boko Haram to forge links with known regional and international terrorist networks, including Al-Qaida, Da'esh and Al-Shabaab, present a matter that needs to be taken seriously. Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun has highlighted the various dimensions of the threat posed by Boko Haram, and we share those concerns. We believe that it is critical to support the countries of the region and their various existing security mechanisms by sharing intelligence and by building their capacity to handle old and new security challenges.

In that regard, we take note of the work being done by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, and we encourage the CTITF to help the region develop a comprehensive and integrated strategy to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Furthermore, the need for the coordination of efforts among the United Nations, the African Union and their respective regional mechanisms cannot be overemphasized. In that context, we believe that the proposal for the Security Council to undertake a visit to the region together with the African Union Peace and Security Council would send the right message. We fully subscribe to that idea and share the sentiments of United States Ambassador Power on that matter. She was very convincing, as she was with regard to the other matters that she mentioned.

We are trying to cooperate with some of the countries of the region bilaterally in order to exchange experiences and share intelligence, particularly on linkages among various regional terrorist groups. It is our hope that there will be more enhanced cooperation and coordination on the basis of a common strategy among the countries of the region. We understand the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin region. It has resulted from a number of factors, including the security threats that it has been facing. Although there are competing priorities for addressing the worsening humanitarian situation around the world and the available resources are not commensurate with the challenges at hand, we believe that the situation in the Lake Chad basin region, particularly the plight of women, children, girls and minors there, is excruciatingly painful. We therefore remain hopeful that the United Nations and the rest of the international community will redouble their efforts to respond to the humanitarian challenge facing that region.

Moreover, we cannot overlook the impact of climate change and the extent to which it fuels conflict. That is one of the areas in which the imperatives of development, humanitarian concerns, the dangers of conflict, the problems associated with climate change and human rights concerns converge. It is therefore critical that the challenges facing the region be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for the major contribution that he continues to make in discharging the mandate of his Office, not only with respect to the Lake Chad basin region but also in connection with our own region — the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We express our deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General O'Brien, Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ms. Fatima Askira for their comprehensive briefings. We also welcome the representative of Nigeria.

We would like to raise several points.

First, we take note of the situation in the Lake Chad basin area, which we consider to be difficult and volatile.

Secondly, Kazakhstan strongly supports the work of the African Union aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force on the fight against Boko Haram. This terrorist organization is threatening not just the Lake Chad basin area, but the African continent as a whole. In the struggle against Boko Haram, a global approach on the part of the international community, with leading functions on the part of the African countries, is needed.

Thirdly, Boko Haram remains a great threat to the region, despite the recent achievements reported by the countries of the region, which produced some positive results through increased military cooperation. Kazakhstan strongly condemns the deadly attack that occurred last December, in which 57 people were killed by two women suicide bombers in Maiduguri, Nigeria. We commend the progress made by Benin, Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and other countries of the region in terms of the geographical area of operational activity and potential of this terrorist organization.

Fourthly, another aspect of this fight is the deteriorating humanitarian situation. The humanitarian crisis has worsened despite the military success against the group and is now one of the largest in the world. More than 7 million people in Nigeria, the Niger, Cameroon and Chad are internally displaced as a result. As was mentioned by the representative of the United Kingdom, more than 11 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, we have to ensure respect for the human rights of children, women, youth and all other vulnerable groups in the region. The slogan of our campaign to the Security Council included energy, water and food security for all. We need to ensure such important aspects of security for the region. We also emphasize in this regard that significant numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons add pressure on host communities that are already insecure in terms of those important pillars.

We therefore also support the Economic Community of West African States initiative to create a special fund of solidarity with the victims of terrorism. As our ministers discussed two days ago, we are convinced that the long-term stability and sustainable peace can be achieved only by understanding the strong connection between peace, security and development. In this regard, we should address the root causes of the crisis.

Fifthly, another problem is that some areas of the region remain inaccessible to humanitarian actors owing to the continued threat posed by Boko Haram. We believe that Council members must focus on how to increase the volume of humanitarian aid to the region and ensure that it reaches its final destination in full.

Finally, we commend the efforts of and measures taken by the United Nations, the African Union, international organizations and Governments to introduce peace initiatives in the Lake Chad basin area, thus requiring a synthesis between bottom-up approaches and top-down strategies in a way that brings about transformation.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation would like to congratulate the Swedish presidency of the Council for having convened this timely debate on the complex, multidimensional situation in the Lake Chad basin. It really is an urgent issue of concern, as was described very eloquently this afternoon by our briefers, Mr. Zerihoun, Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Askira, whom we all thank for their respective statements and for the updated and detailed information that they provided us.

Without referring back to the origins of the crisis, I think it fair to say that the physical constraints facing the area, including drought, desertification and climate change, compounded by the overexploitation of natural resources, are at the root of the structural vulnerability of the countries and the peoples of the Lake Chad basin. The situation exacerbates the effects and consequences of social conflicts relating to access to and the use and allocation of the basin's natural resources.

All of these factors taken together, as well as their negative impact on the social and economic fronts, have made this area fertile ground for the deadly activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group. In that respect, we welcome the fact, as has been mentioned that during the past year its spread was stemmed thanks to the concerted efforts of the countries of the region, supported in particular by the African Union, subregional organizations and other organizations and countries throughout the world.

But despite Boko Haram having been militarily weakened by the regional, coordinated response against it through, inter alia, the Multinational Joint Task Force, we must point out that it is by no means defeated and retains the capacity to wreak havoc, as it continues to demonstrate through various asymmetrical attacks and other acts of savagery. These residual activities unfortunately continue to have devastating effects on the political, social, economic, humanitarian and human rights situation in the areas where the group continues to carry out its attacks. Thus in addition to military action, an urgent and adequate humanitarian response must be provided so as to meet the numerous challenges on the ground, which include the massive displacement of people, the specific protection needs of refugees and displaced persons, food insecurity, and taking responsibility for the victims as well as for ex-Boko Haram fighters and their families, with a view to reintegrating them into their already crisis-affected societies of origin.

The report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2016/996), issued in late November 2016, indicates that there were approximately 1,500 Boko Haram defectors in recent months. In this respect, the international call issued with

a view to enabling the reintegration of such defectors and members of their families should be heeded.

We commend the efforts undertaken by partners, including members of the Council, of course, and those deployed by humanitarian organizations, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Médecins sans frontières and other agencies. However, my delegation calls on the international community to increase its support for the region in the fight against Boko Haram by continuing to provide humanitarian assistance and support for early recovery, which the region urgently needs.

Here we would underline the crucial importance of funding. As Mr. O'Brien noted, $1.5 billion is being requested by humanitarian organizations to respond to the most urgent needs for 2017. It would also be desirable for the international community to provide political, logistical and financial support to the regional initiatives and structures that were created to overcome the challenges facing the region, including the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

Nevertheless, the mobilization of the region at the national and subregional levels remains a priority. In that connection, it is important, as the Secretary-General has noted, for the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States finally to be able to hold the planned summit of Heads of State and Government on Boko Haram in order to devise a interregional strategy to address the crisis caused by that group, but also to specifically address the root causes that contributed to its emergence and resilience.

In addition to the military and humanitarian dimensions of our response, we must also consider the equally important elements of education, information and communication — with particular emphasis on raising awareness among the population, especially women and young people, and on engaging in dialogue with religious and other leaders, who have a key role to play in countering the violent extremist narrative. Similarly, in order to secure the tenuous progress made in our response to the crisis, our strategy must bolster the resilience of the States and communities of the Lake Chad basin region through urgent interventions within a broader long-term development framework.

In conclusion, the Security Council must actively consider the issue and show proactive solidarity to the States, organizations and humanitarian groups of the region that provide emergency aid to individuals and communities in need. Given the urgency of the situation, an imminent Security Council visit to the Lake Chad basin countries, as some delegations have suggested, would be a clear show of the support that we would like to see, as it could give new life to efforts under way to resolve the crisis.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for their detailed briefings about the development of the military, political and humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin region. We would also like to thank Ms. Fatima Yerima Askira for her very moving statement.

We are particularly concerned about the continuing activities of Boko Haram, which, in spite of the losses that it has suffered, remains a major source of instability in Cameroon, the Niger, Nigeria and Chad. The fact that Boko Haram pledged allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in March 2015 makes it even more urgent to mount an immediate, unified and robust response to the terrorist threat in Africa.

We are very worried about the group's new tactic, whereby it refrains from direct clashes with Government armed forces, preferring to attack civilians or civilian facilities and use suicide bombers and explosive devices. That is precisely why ridding territories of fighters has not led to improvements in the humanitarian sphere. The problems of refugees, humanitarian access and other issues related to terrorist activities cannot be resolved without eliminating the threat posed by the terrorist group. In that connection, we welcome the efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission States and the Multinational Joint Task Force, which was created by them and Benin. We are convinced that only through joint efforts will it be possible to achieve victory.

In that connection, we also think that the decision adopted at the twenty-seventh African Union Summit, held in Kigali in July 2016, on establishing a counter-terrorist fund for the continent will be crucial to the elimination of terrorism in Africa. We also greatly value the measures taken by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the specialized agencies of the United Nations in providing multifaceted assistance to the countries of the Lake Chad basin region. We are convinced that, in addition to combating

the terrorist threat, it is essential to tackle the deep-rooted causes of the region's problems, which requires eliminating poverty and fostering social and economic development. We will continue to actively cooperate with the States of the region in the framework of regional structures, including the African Union, and on a bilateral basis.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would also like to thank all of today's briefers for their important input.

As we have all heard from the briefers, the humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin region is truly one of the most neglected in the world. So far, the international community has not had much success in resolving the multifaceted problems of the region — not for lack of trying, but because of a lack of understanding of how to deal with all of them at once. Extreme poverty, severe food insecurity and malnutrition, weak governance, climate change, particularly desertification, and the destructive activities of Boko Haram — all of those factors contribute to the disastrous situation. In that regard, we have a few points to make.

First of all, how can the Security Council effectively react to the crisis, apart from expressing its deep concerns and calling for more international awareness? Such actions no longer impress anyone. Instead, we have to find a proper role for the Security Council to play. First of all, the Council has to be fully aware that a constantly deteriorating humanitarian crisis can evolve into a full-blown threat to peace and security in the region. An already apparent constraint with security implications lies in the fact that, owing to dwindling economic resources and the resulting strains on State budgets, regional Governments are struggling in their efforts to eradicate Boko Haram, which poses an undeniable and serious security threat.

In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and other actors that are fighting that terrorist group. But the countries of the region need additional support from the international community in order to rise to that challenge.

In our opinion, the Council would do well to engage in a serious discussion on how to strengthen the use of existing sanctions mechanisms against Boko Haram's members and its affiliates. Relevant inputs and initiatives from the region would contribute greatly to the Council's work on that subject. Additionally, improving socioeconomic conditions has to be the top priority, if any progress is to be made in alleviating the immense suffering of people in the Lake Chad basin region.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun and Mr. Stephen O'Brien for their briefings this morning on the humanitarian and security situation in the Lake Chad basin region. We would also like to particularly thank Ms. Fatima Yerima Askira from the Borno Women Development Initiative for her testimony.

As I listened to the statements of my colleagues, I took notes on some of the words that impacted me personally, but I can only assume that they had a similar effect on everyone gathered here: famine, slavery, captivity, abduction, forced marriage, brutality, extreme crisis, horror, fear, disease, killings, suicide attacks, displaced persons, destruction and extreme poverty.

We, too, are concerned about the humanitarian and security crisis that has beset the Lake Chad basin region for several years now. Boko Haram continues to pose a threat to the subregion, the African continent and international peace and security. We commend the progress made in combating that extremist group thanks to the enhanced cooperation over the past two years among Nigeria, Chad, the Niger, Cameroon and other countries through the special Multinational Joint Task Force.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia firmly condemns the acts committed by the Boko Haram terrorist group, which poses a serious threat to international peace and security and exacerbates the region's already fragile humanitarian situation. The actions of that terrorist organization are reprehensible and include the kidnapping of girls, boys and young men and women, as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure, such as schools. We express our solidarity with the victims of Boko Haram's criminal activities, including the most recent deadly attack in Madagali on 9 December 2016, in which 57 people died from two suicide bomb attacks and the attack described by Mr. O'Brien that occurred on 8 January. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of those who were kidnapped, including those who were forcibly recruited.

The humanitarian disaster affecting the region is a source of great concern. As many members of the Council have already pointed out, the crisis in the Lake Chad subregion has had little media coverage but is one of the greatest challenges faced by the

Security Council and the international community. According to information released by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in December 2016, 11 million people in the Lake Chad basin region required humanitarian aid and 2.6 million people were displaced. As I read those figures, the same sentiment as that expressed by my Uruguayan colleague crossed my mind. Bolivia has a population of 10 million, and the tragic situation before us today affects an even greater number of people than my country's entire population.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia reaffirms that defeating terrorism once and for all does not depend on military action alone. As Ms. Askira stated, in order to make headway on the problem of addressing its root causes, it is essential to develop a long-term response not only to the military and political challenges, but also, and most important, to the economic and social challenges. Bolivia will support initiatives to bolster the efforts of the countries on the front line of that fight, while respecting their sovereignty and independence. Similarly, we call upon regional organizations to enhance their efforts to address that tragic situation.

The President: I would now like to make a brief statement in my capacity as the representative of Sweden.

Earlier this week, during our open debate on conflict prevention and sustaining peace (see S/PV.7857), my Foreign Minister noted that prevention efforts require us to address the root causes of conflict and instability before the crises concerned reach the Security Council's agenda. The subject of today's briefing is a vivid example of the consequences of the failure to act early in response to fragility and underdevelopment.

As stated by many, there is a clear need for a comprehensive regional approach, focusing not only on the immediate insecurity and humanitarian crisis, but also on longer-term challenges and root causes. The aim of putting the Lake Chad basin region on today's agenda is not to stigmatize a region, but rather to put the spotlight on a silent and often neglected crisis and to pave the way forward for increased engagement in the region and with the region.

The situation is a complex one. The conflict and violence that has led to immense human suffering and humanitarian needs in the region are the result of an insurgency by Boko Haram, which has indiscriminately been targeting civilians, even attacking them, even in places to which they have fled to find shelter and safety. However, the root causes run deeper. They include the challenges presented by a growing population of young people with little hope for the future and a lack of investment in the region. It includes climate change and its impacts — drought, land degradation and desertification — which lead to resource scarcity and food insecurity, which, in turn, generate conditions that spur conflict.

I believe that we need to ensure that the United Nations system can provide adequate risk assessment related to climate change, as has been requested by many African and Pacific island States. I think that that would also improve the way in which the Council understands the connection between climate and security. The large number of vulnerable, malnourished and displaced persons was mentioned by Mr. O'Brien, and they are almost impossible to comprehend. I just wanted to remind the Council of the picture that Ms. Askira painted for us earlier. Her voice was powerful, but the line was slightly weak. She said,

> "Picture a woman lying sick in the sand, covering herself with a tattered rug. Her children, four, six and seven years old, sitting right next to her, with no idea of what to eat that day".

Progress and scaled-up assistance in recent months by the United Nations system and partner organizations deserve to be recognized as part of the regional efforts to address the crisis. But the desperate conditions persist, and recent weeks have once again seen an upsurge in suicide bombings and attacks on civilians and displaced persons. So what do we do?

First, we must step up humanitarian assistance. The conference to be held in Oslo on 24 February presents an opportunity to mobilize additional support and reinforced engagement on the part of the international community. We must also bring in development actors and international financial institutions more robustly, so as to enable recovery, reconstruction and longer-term development, which is crucial for creating conditions for the return of displaced populations and for building resilience.

We must also heed the voices of women in their diverse roles. Ms. Askira's powerful briefing to the Council presents clear evidence of that. I think that we also need to work more closely with and support national Governments and regional organizations, including in their efforts to make progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on which we

have all agreed and which needs to be implemented. As many have mentioned, we need to support Governments in their fight against Boko Haram, so as to replace Boko Haram's savagery with the rule of law, justice and benevolent State authority. The nature of the crisis, which involves challenges that do not respect borders, requires an integrated and comprehensive response for the whole region. I think the idea behind today's briefing was precisely to raise awareness, but we must remain engaged across the board and follow up. As the next step, I think that it makes perfect sense to follow up with a trip by the Council to the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Bosah (Nigeria): First and foremost, I would like to thank the Swedish presidency and the entire membership of the Security Council for organizing today's briefing. It is indeed emblematic of the interest of the United Nations in the security situation in the Lake Chad basin region. We are particularly and deeply appreciative of the work by the Council and its positive attitude in seeking to resolve the security and humanitarian situation and the crisis in the Lake Chad basin region. Our special appreciation goes to Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his insights into the situation in the region, and to Ms. Fatima Yerima Askira for sharing her perspective on the matter being discussed.

When Boko Haram reared its ugly head in Nigeria a couple of years ago, it heavily impacted virtually every facet of human endeavour in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, including the economy, policy and people's livelihoods. That impact also had unsavoury reverberations across the country. The insurgency and its attendant consequences may have tested our will, but they have not broken the resolve and the resilience of the Nigerian people.

It has been a difficult time that has fuelled additional waves of terrorism and violent extremism in other parts of the world. In spite of the devastation in the Lake Chad basin region occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency, we are happy to report that the Multilateral Joint Task Force has recorded great success in degrading Boko Haram. We have continued to witness the emergence of survivors and victims who have been rescued from Boko Haram's brutal oppression in the north-east.

For its part, the Nigerian Government has made significant progress in the fight against Boko Haram. Just before Christmas, our military successfully took over the Sambisa forest, formerly a hideout of the Boko Haram militants. That progress notwithstanding, the Government is aware of the other challenges impacting development in the region, including the shrinking of Lake Chad, a situation that continues to serve as a tinderbox for violence and attendant humanitarian crises. Tackling that problem successfully by recharging the lake will require major international intervention.

As we celebrate our gains in the war against Boko Haram, we are not oblivious to the humanitarian challenges that the crisis has created through the massive displacement of persons, the abandonment of farmlands and the disruption of the educational system. In that regard, the Government of Nigeria is embarking on programmes aimed at restoring the livelihoods of the communities in those areas. We have put in place a robust, people-driven counter-terrorism strategy based on a combination of revamped security operations and a human rights-based approach, which will help to implement rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction. In order to achieve that, we have empowered the Presidential Committee on North-East Intervention with a mandate to coordinate and provide synergy, leadership and direction for the various initiatives in the area, encompassing the Government, development partners, private foundations and civil society. We are also accelerating the implementation of existing legal and institutional frameworks for alleviating our people's suffering in the region in order to improve the effectiveness of our humanitarian efforts, in the spirit of the Istanbul World Humanitarian Summit of May 2016.

Nigeria is firmly committed to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and recognizes that it is the primary responsibility of States to protect civilians within their national jurisdiction. That conviction underlines our Government's resolve to take all the measures necessary to protect civilians in the battle against Boko Haram and similar terrorist groups. Indeed, no priority is higher for the Government than to rescue all those whom the group is holding hostage. We should stress that the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls remain in Nigeria's national consciousness, and that the Government is working hard to ensure the release of all Nigerians held captive by Boko Haram, including the Chibok girls. Once they are freed, we are ready

to ensure their swift rehabilitation and reintegration and the continuation of their studies. Overall, we are focusing our efforts on ensuring that all victims can regain their personal dignity and resume the enjoyment of their God-given fundamental rights and freedoms as soon as possible in Nigeria's democratic setting.

I would like to emphasize that our holistic approach in that endeavour is based on the promotion of good governance, transparency and accountability. We renew our call for determined international action to help us meet the victims' humanitarian needs and address the root causes of terrorism itself. Genuine humanitarian intervention by the international community must no longer be delayed or downplayed. It is time for collective global action aimed at investing in the people of Nigeria's north-east and the Lake Chad basin region.

The President: I would like once again to thank the three briefers and the representative of Nigeria for their participation in today's meeting. And, of course, I thank the members of the Council for their statements and, more important, their engagement on this issue.

We have noted and welcomed the progress made by the Governments in the region to push back Boko Haram and improve humanitarian access. That progress must be consolidated, sustained and supported. I heard support around the table for a reinforced humanitarian engagement, working with the Governments of the region to meet the growing humanitarian needs there. In that regard, the conference in Oslo in February will be an important milestone. I also heard support for more long-term and sustained engagement from development partners in the region, which would include addressing the root causes of the problems and the underlying needs. Finally, there were calls for more regular and sustained engagement on the issue on the part of the Council, and it was proposed that the Council visit the region. Let us make every effort to ensure that 2017 does indeed become a turning point for the people of the region of the Lake Chad basin.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7862

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7862nd meeting
Friday, 13 January 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Skoog	(Sweden)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/1072)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/1072)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1072, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

Mr. Chambas (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by wishing members a very happy 2017. It is an honour for me to once again brief the Security Council on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. In addition to the report (S/2016/1072) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel covering the period from 1 July to 31 December 2016, I would like to inform members of recent developments and trends and of their impact in the region.

At the outset, I would like to stress that much progress has been made since our previous meeting, in July 2016 (see S/PV.7735). In particular, the citizens of the region have shown their maturity and their willingness to freely and peacefully exercise their right to choose their leaders. By way of example, I would like to mention Cape Verde and Ghana, which carried out presidential elections in strict compliance with the norms and standards in this area, which confirmed their status as good examples in the region and beyond.

(*spoke in English*)

On 1 December 2016, voters waited patiently to cast their ballots in presidential elections in the Gambia, which took place against a backdrop of key opposition members being in prison and a communication shutdown. I shared the joy of many witnessing the announcement of the results by the Independent Electoral Commission and the concession speech by President Yahya Jammeh Babil Mansa on 2 December. Conversely, we were saddened by the quickly unfolding political crisis resulting from President Jammeh changing his mind and deciding to reject the results, citing irregularities, calling for fresh elections to be managed by a new independent electoral commission, and eventually lodging a petition aiming to invalidate the results of the 1 December polls.

On 13 December 2016, I took part in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Heads of State mission to the Gambia and, since then, have been facilitating interactions and negotiations aimed at ensuring a peaceful transfer of power from the outgoing President to President-elect Barrow. On 17 December, at the fiftieth ordinary session of its Authority of Heads of State and Government, ECOWAS agreed to uphold the results of the 1 December elections and decided to take all the necessary actions to enforce the results. UNOWAS is fully involved in supporting the ECOWAS-led mediation, which continues to explore all avenues towards a peaceful transfer of power.

A high-level delegation has returned to Banjul today, 13 January, as we meet here, in an attempt to persuade President Jammeh Babil Mansa to abide by the elections results and step down. The delegation plans to leave no doubt about the determination of ECOWAS to use all the necessary means, including force, to have the will of the Gambian people upheld. Should that be deemed necessary, ECOWAS intends to seek the endorsement of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the formal approval of the Security Council to deploy troops to the Gambia.

Despite a pre-election period that was marked at times by high political tension, the people of Ghana lived up to their reputation for organizing elections that serve as an inspiration for the rising tide of democracy throughout the African continent. I salute outgoing President John Dramani Mahama for his gracious acceptance of the results, and I congratulate President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on his victory. While credit is due to the people of West Africa, I would also like to acknowledge the country's regional and international partners that jointly accompanied those important milestones.

In Guinea, we are concerned that the local elections, which are forecast to take place in February 2017, in accordance with the terms of the 12 October political agreement, may be postponed. There is still a lack of consensus between the ruling party and the opposition regarding the balloting system. Moreover, the amendments to the electoral code, which are needed to hold the elections in February 2017, were not adopted during the recent parliamentary session. In fact, the opposition members of Parliament withdrew from the National Assembly on the last day of its session, threatening to resume street protests. UNOWAS will continue to engage Guinean stakeholders on the imperative of implementing the provisions of the 12 October agreement.

Elsewhere in the region, a number of countries are undertaking efforts to update their Constitutions and build the foundations for prosperous, cohesive and democratic societies. In line with the ECOWAS vision of moving from an "ECOWAS of States" to an "ECOWAS of people ", UNOWAS continues to encourage these efforts to take place in a spirit of dialogue and participation.

During the reporting period, several parents in Nigeria were reunited with their daughters who had been captured by Boko Haram in the north-eastern town of Chibok approximately two years ago. Enhanced efforts are under way to release more of the abductees. Several hundred terrorists have also collectively surrendered to the authorities, due, in part, to the concerted efforts of troop-contributing countries and partners supporting the Multinational Joint Task Force.

At the same time, the group's attacks have recently become more frequent, disrupting the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes. With new areas liberated, the full extent of the tragedy has become all the more visible. Hundreds of thousands of children are severely malnourished and may face starvation. While the United Nations has scaled up the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Lake Chad basin countries, in particular in Borno state in Nigeria and Diffa province in the Niger, I am concerned that the Nigeria humanitarian response plan remains less than 37 per cent funded. Council members will agree that we can, and must, do better.

Amid increasingly vocal internal demands for peace dividends to materialize, I call upon partners to support the democratic and economic consolidation of Burkina Faso, which finds itself in the middle of a volatile regional security environment. Our aim is to ensure that post-conflict societies do not relapse into crisis, thereby hurting peace consolidation and democratic gains. Last Friday, 6 January, in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, it was worrisome to see former fighters who had been integrated in the armed forces try to take control of the locality of Bouaké and other cities on account of remuneration-related grievances.

Looking forward, UNOWAS will enthusiastically contribute to the implementation of resolution 2282 (2016) and the General Assembly resolution on sustaining peace. My Office is an active member of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Sustaining Peace in Burkina Faso and is contributing to the development of the sustaining peace strategy in that pilot country. My good offices and the technical-level support of UNOWAS will continue to provide support to this holistic United Nations approach in Burkina Faso and throughout West Africa and the Sahel.

My Office will also provide support on issues related to regional stabilization, including through the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. As members are aware, the review of the integrated strategy, which the Council had mandated, was completed last year. Taking a critical look at the challenges of coordination against a shifting implementation environment, we remain committed to promoting and coordinating a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of deprivation, exclusion and insecurity.

In line with the recommendations of the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446), the Secretary-General's report on the future of United Nations peace operations (S/2015/682),and the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (see S/2015/490), we will continue to strengthen our collaboration with regional and subregional partners. To mention just a few examples, we have stepped up our partnership with the Group of Five for the Sahel, including by facilitating cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and providing support to the Group of Five regional cell on the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.

In support of the Strategy for Cross-border Security in the Mano River Union, we have facilitated platforms where representatives of the joint border-security and confidence-building units shared experiences in order

to strengthen security and cooperation in a way that also binds youth, women and other community actors. That is but one example of an inclusive approach working together across institutions. In that regard, I call upon the member States of the Mano River Union, as well as the broader international community, to provide the minimum resources required to maintain and expand the unit's operations.

The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel is collaborating closely with the United Nations missions in the region and, in the context of the drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission in Liberia, we are intensifying our collaboration and information-sharing at the leadership and technical levels.

Before concluding, allow me to mention that the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission continued the emplacement of pillars for the definitive demarcation of the border between the two countries, a process that has been accompanied by confidence-building activities on both sides of the border. The Mixed Commission remains a shining example of what long-term commitment and effective cooperation can achieve.

Rest assured that my Office will redouble its efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace in West Africa and the Sahel, always of course in collaboration with other institutions of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the wider international community.

The President: I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the member of the Council who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Uruguay would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, for his briefing. At the same time, we would like to congratulate him on his work as head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

We furthermore wish to congratulate those countries of the region that have made a commitment to democracy and to political dialogue, such as Benin and Ghana. We also hope that the electoral process in Guinea will unfold normally over the coming months.

The role played by Senegal throughout 2016 as coordinator and mediator with respect to the crises in Mali, Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia is also worth highlighting. Furthermore, and as we expressed yesterday in this Chamber (see S/PV.7861), we welcome the progress being made in terms of security by countries in the Lake Chad basin, which have scarce resources and face a terrorist threat that is destabilizing and threatening the region. That notwithstanding, they have spared no effort in the fight, and have obtained praiseworthy results. Nevertheless, the terrorist threat in the region should not be underestimated, including in the Sahel region, where the crisis has worsened, demanding the attention of the Security Council on various occasions.

Uruguay is principally concerned by the political situation in the Gambia and in Guinea-Bissau, the political leaders of which are not respecting existing constitutional legal frameworks. Neither are they demonstrating respect for their social commitments or upholding the responsiblities given them by their citizens. In that regard, we welcome the mediation efforts being led by the Economic Community of West African States and the countries of the region. We invite the Presidents of both countries to work towards finding a peaceful solution to that political impasse.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.